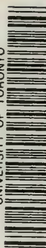
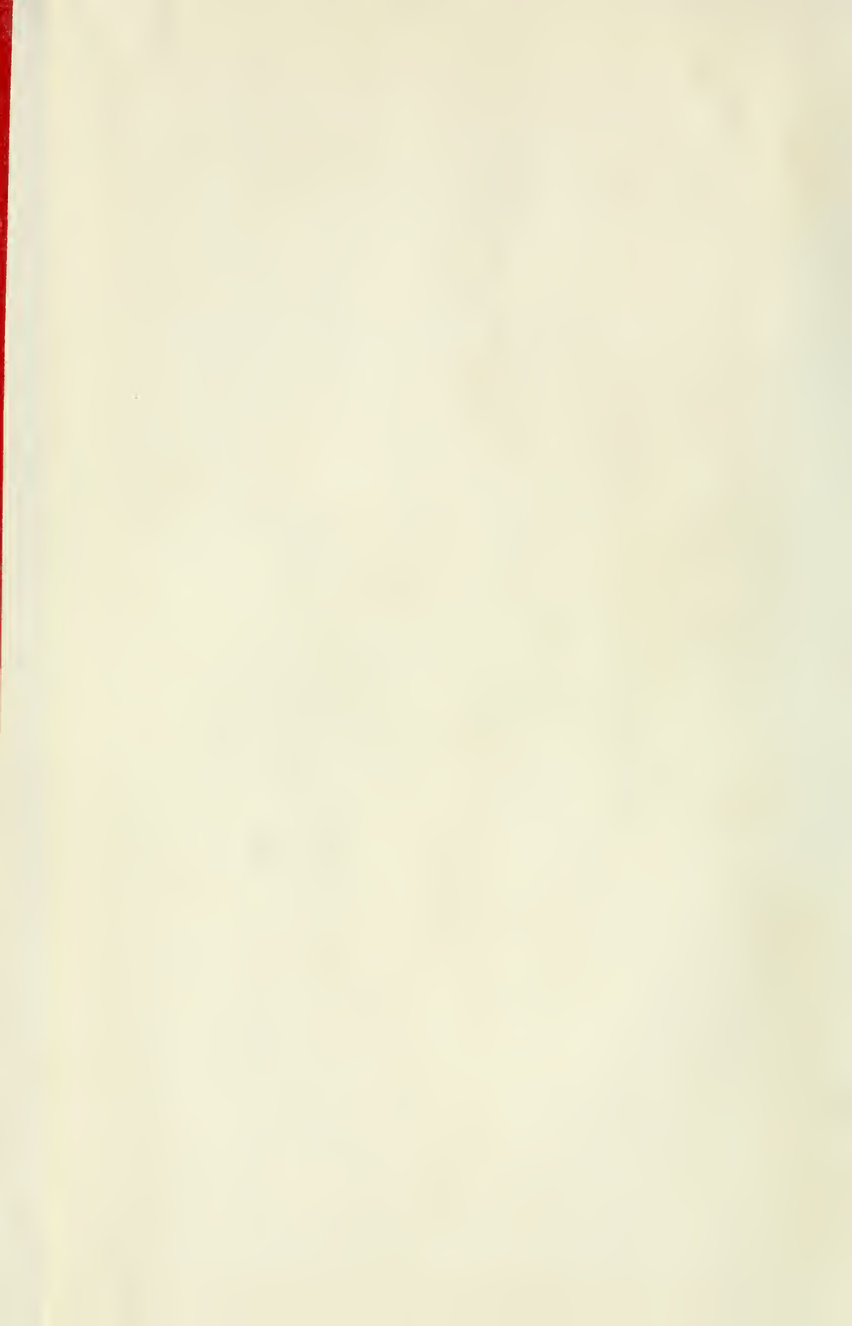

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
3 1761 00271256 0

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/brontslifelett01shoruoft



83

309

219 c

THE BRONTËS

LIFE AND LETTERS

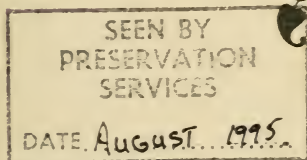
THE BRONTËS

LIFE AND LETTERS

BEING AN ATTEMPT TO PRESENT A FULL AND FINAL RECORD OF THE LIVES OF THE THREE SISTERS, CHARLOTTE, EMILY AND ANNE BRONTË FROM THE BIOGRAPHIES OF MRS. GASKELL AND OTHERS, AND FROM NUMEROUS HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED MANUSCRIPTS AND LETTERS

BY

CLEMENT SHORTER



VOL. I

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

LONDON : MCMVIII

First Edition printed September 1908
Second Edition printed November 1908

PR
4168
S44
1908
V.1

Edinburgh: T. and A. CONSTABLE, Printers to His Majesty

PREFACE

The Life of Charlotte Brontë has been written, with finality all will agree, by Mrs. Gaskell, but when an author has attained to great fame there is a public, however small, with whom the interest extends beyond a standard biography. It was so with Johnson, and we have not only the incomparable 'Boswell,' but certain volumes of letters edited by Dr. Birkbeck Hill. It was so with Scott, and we have not only the always interesting 'Lockhart,' but four volumes of letters and diaries that every lover of Sir Walter delights in. Thus it is that I have to congratulate myself upon the fact that the widespread interest in the Brontës has secured for my book, *Charlotte Brontë and Her Circle*, a very large audience, both in Great Britain and the United States. The merits of that book were due in no measure to the compiler, but rather to the happy accident which placed in his hands a great deal of material not known to any previous writer on the subject.

During the eleven years that have passed since I first published *Charlotte Brontë and Her Circle*, correspondents from all parts of the world have forwarded me documents and letters which I am glad to add here, thus making this book, which I call *The Brontës: Life and Letters*, very largely a new work. Everything that was in the former

work has been incorporated, and a quantity of extremely valuable new material has been added, including many hitherto unpublished letters. The placing for the first time of the whole of the correspondence in chronological order will, it is hoped, be considered in itself sufficient to justify this publication.

It had always been my ambition to present these letters in chronological order, but I found that no book of the kind could be considered satisfactory that did not include all the letters already published, even those that were familiar to the readers of Mrs. Gaskell's biography. The exhaustion of the copyright of Mrs. Gaskell's book has given me my opportunity. I have every reason to hope that there are many Brontë enthusiasts who will welcome these volumes, which, although avowedly a compilation, will make a sympathetic appeal to those who have come under the glamour of the Brontë story.

I have to offer a word of thanks to Dr. Robertson Nicoll, to Mr. C. W. Hatfield of Pershore, and to Mr. Butler Wood of Bradford, for kindly reading my proof sheets, and for valuable suggestions. I have also to acknowledge indebtedness to Mr. Thomas J. Wise and Mr. H. Buxton Forman for the loan of correspondence.

C. S.

CONTENTS

PAGE

PRELIMINARY—MRS. GASKELL'S BIOGRAPHY, . . . 1

CHAPTER I

PATRICK BRONTË AND MARIA HIS WIFE, ... 21

CHAPTER II

THE BRONTËS AT THORNTON, ... 50

CHAPTER III

INFANCY AT HAWORTH AND COWAN BRIDGE, . . . 63

CHAPTER IV

LITERARY CHILDHOOD, ... 71

CHAPTER V

SCHOOL-DAYS AT ROE HEAD, ... 79

CHAPTER VI

HAWORTH, 1832-1835, ... 93

CHAPTER VII

GOVERNESS AT ROE HEAD AND DEWSBURY MOOR, . 117

CHAPTER VIII

MRS. SIDGWICK'S NURSERY GOVERNESS, ... 149

CHAPTER IX

PAGE

THE ART OF LOVE, ... 163

CHAPTER X

UPPERWOOD HOUSE, RAWDON—MARCH TO DECEMBER 1841, . 202

CHAPTER XI

THE PENSIONNAT HÉGER, BRUSSELS, . . . 229

CHAPTER XII

SECOND SOJOURN IN BRUSSELS, ... 254

CHAPTER XIII

A QUIET YEAR AT HAWORTH, ... [illegible]

CHAPTER XIV

CURRER, ELLIS, AND ACTON BELL, ... [illegible]

CHAPTER XV

'THE PROFESSOR' AND 'JANE EYRE,' . . . . 3[illegible]

CHAPTER XVI

A LITERARY FRIENDSHIP, ... 380

CHAPTER XVII

MARY TAYLOR, ... 428

CHAPTER XVIII

THE DEATH OF BRANWELL BRONTË, ... 451

PRELIMINARY

MRS. GASKELL'S BIOGRAPHY

THERE have been few biographies that have secured a more widespread interest than the *Life of Charlotte Brontë* by Mrs. Gaskell. It has held a position of singular popularity for fifty years; and while biography after biography has come and gone, it still commands a place side by side with Boswell's *Johnson* and Lockhart's *Scott*, although in all essentials it is considerably inferior to these. There were obvious reasons for this success. Mrs. Gaskell was herself a popular novelist, who commanded a very wide audience, and *Cranford*, at least, has taken a place among the classics of our literature. She brought to bear upon the biography of Charlotte Brontë some of those literary gifts which had made the charm of her eight volumes of romance. And these gifts were employed upon a romance of real life, not less fascinating than any thing which imagination could have furnished. Charlotte Brontë's success as an author turned the eyes of the world upon her. Thackeray had sent her his *Vanity Fair* before he knew her name or sex. The precious volume lies before me—

with the grateful regards of W M Thackeray.

July 18. 1848.

And Thackeray did not send many inscribed copies of his books even to successful authors. Speculation concerning the author of *Jane Eyre* was sufficiently rife during those

seven sad years of literary renown to make a biography imperative when death came to Charlotte Brontë in 1855. All the world had heard something of the three marvellous sisters, daughters of a poor parson in Yorkshire, going one after another to their death with such melancholy swiftness, but leaving—two of them, at least—imperishable work behind them. The old blind father and the bereaved husband read the confused eulogy and criticism, sometimes with a sad pleasure at the praise, oftener with a sadder pain at the grotesque inaccuracy. Small wonder that it became impressed upon Mr. Brontë's mind that an authoritative biography was desirable. His son-in-law, Mr. Arthur Bell Nicholls, who lived with him in the Haworth parsonage during the six weary years which succeeded Mrs. Nicholls's death, was not so readily won to the unveiling of his wife's inner life; and although we, who read Mrs. Gaskell's *Memoir*, have every reason to be thankful for Mr. Brontë's decision, peace of mind would undoubtedly have been more assured to Charlotte Brontë's surviving relatives had the most rigid silence been maintained. The book, when it appeared in 1857,[1] gave infinite pain to a number of people, including Mr. Brontë and Mr. Nicholls; and Mrs. Gaskell's subsequent experiences had the effect of persuading her that all biographical literature was intolerable and undesirable. She would seem to have given instructions that no biography of herself should be written. Her daughters have respected that wish, and now that forty years have passed since her death we have no substantial record of one of the most fascinating women of her age. The loss to literature has been forcibly brought home to the present writer, who has in his possession a number of letters written by Mrs. Gaskell to numerous friends of Charlotte Brontë during

[1] Mrs. Gaskell's biography of Charlotte Brontë must be read in the 'Haworth edition,' printed in 1900 by Smith, Elder and Co., in England, and by Harper Bros., in the United States. In this edition will be found sixty-five letters to her publisher, Mr. George Smith, and to his mother, that are not obtainable elsewhere.

the progress of the biography. They serve, all of them, to impress one with the singular charm of the woman, her humanity and breadth of sympathy. They make us think better of Mrs. Gaskell, as Thackeray's letters to Mrs. Brookfield make us think better of the author of *Vanity Fair*.

Apart from these letters, a journey in the footsteps, as it were, of Mrs. Gaskell reveals to us the remarkable conscientiousness with which she set about her task. It would have been possible, with so much fame behind her, to have secured an equal success, and certainly an equal pecuniary reward, had she merely written a brief monograph with such material as was voluntarily placed in her hands. Mrs. Gaskell possessed a higher ideal of a biographer's duties. She spared no pains to find out the facts; she visited every spot associated with the name of Charlotte Brontë—Thornton, Haworth, Cowan Bridge, Birstall, Brussels—and she wrote countless letters to the friends of Charlotte Brontë's earlier days.

But why, it may be asked, was Mrs. Gaskell selected as biographer? The choice was made by Mr. Brontë, and it would have been difficult to have named any other practised writer with equal qualifications. When Mr. Brontë had once decided that there should be an authoritative biography—and he alone was active in the matter—there could be but little doubt upon whom the task would fall. Among all the friends whom fame had brought to Charlotte, Mrs. Gaskell stood prominent for her literary gifts and her large-hearted sympathy. She had made the acquaintance of Miss Brontë when the latter was on a visit to Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth, in 1850; and a letter from Charlotte to her father, and others to Mr. W. S. Williams, which will be found in due chronological order, indicate the beginning of a friendship which was to leave so striking a record in literary history.

But the friendship, which commenced so late in Char-

lotte Brontë's life, never reached the stage of downright intimacy. Of this there is abundant evidence in the biography; and Mrs. Gaskell was forced to rely upon the correspondence of older friends of Charlotte's. Mr. George Smith, the head of the firm of Smith and Elder, furnished some twenty letters. Mr. W. S. Williams, to whom is due the credit of 'discovering' the author of *Jane Eyre*, lent others; and another member of Messrs. Smith and Elder's staff, Mr. James Taylor, furnished half-a-dozen more; but the best help came from another quarter.

Of the two schoolfellows with whom Charlotte Brontë regularly corresponded from childhood till death, Mary Taylor and Ellen Nussey, the former had destroyed every letter; and thus it came about that by far the larger part of the correspondence in Mrs. Gaskell's biography was addressed to Miss Ellen Nussey, now as 'My dearest Nell,' now simply as 'E.' The unpublished correspondence in my hands, which refers to the biography, opens with a letter from Mrs. Gaskell to Miss Nussey, dated July 6th, 1855.[1] It relates how, in accordance with a request from Mr. Brontë, she had undertaken to write the work, and had been over to Haworth. There she had made the acquaintance of Mr. Nicholls for the first time. She told Mr. Brontë how much she felt the difficulty of the task she had undertaken. Nevertheless, she sincerely desired to make his daughter's character known to all who took deep interest in her writings. Both Mr. Brontë and Mr. Nicholls agreed to help to the utmost, although Mrs. Gaskell was struck by the fact that it was Mr. Nicholls, and not Mr. Brontë, who was more intellectually alive to the attraction which such a book would have for the public. His feelings were opposed to any biography at all; but

[1] An earlier letter, dated June 16th, 1855, from Mr. Brontë to Mrs. Gaskell, begging her to undertake the biography of his daughter, is printed in the Haworth edition of the *Life*.

he had yielded to Mr. Brontë's 'impetuous wish,' and he brought down all the materials he could find, in the shape of about a dozen letters. Mr. Nicholls, moreover, told Mrs. Gaskell that Miss Nussey was the person of all others to apply to; that she had been the friend of his wife ever since Charlotte was fifteen, and that he was writing to Miss Nussey to beg her to let Mrs Gaskell see some of the correspondence.

But here is Mr. Nicholls's actual letter, as well as earlier letters from and to Miss Nussey, which would seem to indicate that it was really a suggestion from that lady that produced the application to Mrs. Gaskell. She desired that some attempt should be made to furnish a biography of her friend—if only to set at rest, once and for all, the speculations of the gossiping community with whom Charlotte Brontë's personality was still shrouded in mystery.

TO REV. A. B. NICHOLLS

BROOKROYD, *June 6th*, 1855.

DEAR MR. NICHOLLS,—I have been much hurt and pained by the perusal of an article in *Sharpe* for this month, entitled 'A Few Words about *Jane Eyre*.' You will be certain to see the rticle, and I am sure both you and Mr. Brontë will feel acutely he misrepresentations and the malignant spirit which characterises t. Will you suffer the article to pass current without any efutations? The writer merits the contempt of silence, but there ill be readers and believers. Shall such be left to imbibe a ssue of malignant falsehoods, or shall an attempt be made to do stice to one who so highly deserved justice, whose very name hose who best knew her but speak with reverence and affection? hould not her aged father be defended from the reproach the riter coarsely attempts to bring upon him?

I wish Mrs. Gaskell, who is every way capable, would underke a reply, and would give a sound castigation to the writer. er personal acquaintance with Haworth, the Parsonage, and its mates, fits her for the task, and if on other subjects she lacked

information I would gladly supply her with facts sufficient to set aside much that is asserted, if you yourself are not provided with all the information that is needed on the subjects produced. Will you ask Mrs. Gaskell to undertake this just and honourable defence? I think she would do it gladly. She valued dear Charlotte, and such an act of friendship, performed with her ability and power, could only add to the laurels she has already won. I hope you and Mr. Brontë are well. My kind regards to both.—Believe me, yours sincerely, E. NUSSEY.

TO MISS ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *June 11th*, 1855.

DEAR MISS NUSSEY,—We had not seen the article in *Sharpe*, and very possibly should not, if you had not directed our attention to it. We ordered a copy, and have now read the 'Few Words about *Jane Eyre*.' The writer has certainly made many mistakes, but apparently not from any unkind motive, as he professes to be an admirer of Charlotte's works, pays a just tribute to her genius, and in common with thousands deplores her untimely death. His design seems rather to be to gratify the curiosity of the multitude in reference to one who had made such a sensation in the literary world. But even if the article had been of a less harmless character, we should not have felt inclined to take any notice of it, as by doing so we should have given it an importance which it would not otherwise have obtained. Charlotte herself would have acted thus; and her character stands too high to be injured by the statements in a magazine of small circulation and little influence—statements which the writer prefaces with the remark that he does not vouch for their accuracy. The many laudatory notices of Charlotte and her works which appeared since her death may well make us indifferent to the detractions of a few envious or malignant persons, as there ever will be such.

The remarks respecting Mr. Brontë excited in him only amusement—indeed, I have not seen him laugh as much for some months as he did while I was reading the article to him. We are both well in health, but lonely and desolate.

Mr. Brontë unites with me in kind regards.—Yours sincerely,

A. B. NICHOLLS.

TO MISS ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *July 24th*, 1855.

DEAR MISS NUSSEY,—Some other erroneous notices of Charlotte having appeared, Mr. Brontë has deemed it advisable that some authentic statement should be put forth. He has therefore adopted your suggestion and applied to Mrs. Gaskell, who has undertaken to write a life of Charlotte. Mrs. Gaskell came over yesterday and spent a few hours with us. The greatest difficulty seems to be in obtaining materials to show the development of Charlotte's character. For this reason Mrs. Gaskell is anxious to see her letters, especially those of any early date. I think I understood you to say that you had some; if so, we should feel obliged by your letting us have any that you may think proper, not for publication, but merely to give the writer an insight into her mode of thought. Of course they will be returned after a little time.

I confess that the course most consonant with my own feelings would be to take no steps in the matter, but I do not think it right to offer any opposition to Mr. Brontë's wishes.

We have the same object in view, but should differ in our mode of proceeding. Mr. Brontë has not been very well. Excitement on Sunday (our Rush-bearing) and Mrs. Gaskell's visit yesterday have been rather much for him.—Believe me, sincerely yours,

A. B. NICHOLLS.

Mrs. Gaskell, however, wanted to make Miss Nussey's acquaintance, and asked if she might visit her; and added that she would also like to see Miss Wooler, Charlotte's schoolmistress, if that lady were still alive. To this letter Miss Nussey made the following reply:—

TO MRS. GASKELL, MANCHESTER

ILKLEY, *July 26th*, 1855.

MY DEAR MADAM,—Owing to my absence from home your letter has only just reached me. I had not heard of Mr. Brontë's request, but I am most heartily glad that he has made it. A letter from Mr. Nicholls was forwarded along with yours, which I opened first, and was thus prepared for your communication,

the subject of which is of the deepest interest to me. I will do everything in my power to aid the righteous work you have undertaken, but I feel my powers very limited, and apprehend that you may experience some disappointment that I cannot contribute more largely the information which you desire. I possess a great many letters (for I have destroyed but a small portion of the correspondence), but I fear the early letters are not such as to unfold the character of the writer except in a few points. You perhaps may discover more than is apparent to me. You will read them with a purpose—I perused them only with interests of affection. I will immediately look over the correspondence, and I promise to let you see all that I can confide to your friendly custody. I regret that my absence from home should have made it impossible for me to have the pleasure of seeing you at Brookroyd at the time you propose. I am engaged to stay here till Monday week, and shall be happy to see you any day you name after that date, or, if more convenient to you to come Friday or Saturday in next week, I will gladly return in time to give you the meeting. I am staying with our schoolmistress, Miss Wooler, in this place. I wish her very much to give me leave to ask you here, but she does not yield to my wishes; it would have been pleasanter to me to talk with you among these hills than sitting in my home and thinking of one who had so often been present there.—I am, my dear madam, yours sincerely, ELLEN NUSSEY.

Mrs. Gaskell and Miss Nussey met, and the friendship which ensued was closed only by death; indeed one of the most beautiful letters in the collection in my hands is one signed 'Meta Gaskell,' and dated January 22, 1866. It tells in detail, with infinite tenderness and pathos, of her mother's last moments.[1] That, however, was ten years later than the period with which we are concerned. In 1856 Mrs. Gaskell was energetically engaged upon a biography of her friend which should lack nothing of thoroughness, as she hoped. She claimed to have visited the scenes of all the incidents in Charlotte's life, 'the two little pieces

[1] 'Mama's last days,' it runs, 'had been full of loving thought and tender help for others. She was so sweet and dear and noble beyond words.'

of private governess-ship excepted.' She went one day with Mr. Smith to the Chapter Coffee-House, where the sisters first stayed in London. Another day she is in Yorkshire, where she makes the acquaintance of Miss Wooler, which permitted, as she said, 'a more friendly manner of writing towards Charlotte Brontë's old schoolmistress.' Again she is in Brussels, where Madame Héger refused to see her, although M. Héger was kind and communicative, 'and very much indeed I both like and respect him.' Her countless questions were exceedingly interesting. They covered many pages of note-paper. 'Did Branwell Brontë know of the publication of *Jane Eyre*,' she asks, 'and how did he receive the news?' Mrs. Gaskell was persuaded in her own mind that he had never known of its publication, and we shall presently see that she was right. Charlotte had distinctly informed her, she said, that Branwell was not in a fit condition at the time to be told. 'Where did the girls get the books which they read so continually? Did Emily accompany Charlotte as a pupil when the latter went as a teacher to Roe Head? Why did not Branwell go to the Royal Academy in London to learn painting? Did Emily ever go out as a governess? What were Emily's religious opinions? Did *she* ever make friends?' Such were the questions which came quick and fast to Miss Nussey, and Miss Nussey fortunately kept her replies.

TO MRS. GASKELL, MANCHESTER

BROOKROYD, *October 22nd*, 1856.

MY DEAR MRS. GASKELL,—If you go to London pray try what may be done with regard to a portrait of dear Charlotte. It would greatly enhance the value and interest of the memoir, and be such a satisfaction to people to see something that would settle their ideas of the personal appearance of the dear departed one. It has been a surprise to every stranger, I think, that she was so gentle and lady-like to look upon.

Emily Brontë went to Roe Head as pupil when Charlotte

went as teacher; she stayed there but two months; she never settled, and was ill from nothing but home-sickness. Anne took her place and remained about two years. Emily was a teacher for one six months in a ladies' school in Halifax or the neighbourhood. I do not know whether it was conduct or want of finances that prevented Branwell from going to the Royal Academy. Probably there were impediments of both kinds.

I am afraid if you give me my name I shall feel a prominence in the book that I altogether shrink from. My very last wish would be to appear in the book more than is absolutely necessary. If it were possible, I would choose not to be known at all. It is my friend only that I care to see and recognise, though your framing and setting of the picture will very greatly enhance its value.—I am, my dear Mrs. Gaskell, yours very sincerely,

ELLEN NUSSEY.

The book was published in two volumes, under the title of *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, in the spring of 1857. At first all was well. Mr. Brontë's earliest acknowledgment of the book was one of approbation. Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth expressed the hope that Mr. Nicholls would 'rejoice that his wife would be known as a Christian heroine who could bear her cross with the firmness of a martyr sai[illegible] Canon Kingsley wrote a charming letter to Mrs. Gask[illegible] published in his *Life*, and more than once reprinted sir[illegible]

'Let me renew our long interrupted acquaintance,[illegible] writes from St. Leonard's, under date May 14th, 1857, [illegible] complimenting you on poor Miss Brontë's *Life*. Y[illegible] have had a delicate and a great work to do, and you ha[illegible] done it admirably. Be sure that the book will do goo[illegible] It will shame literary people into some stronger belief th[illegible] a simple, virtuous, practical home life is consistent wi[illegible] high imaginative genius; and it will shame, too, t[illegible] prudery of a not over-cleanly though carefully whi[illegible] washed age, into believing that purity is now (as in all a[illegible] till now) quite compatible with the knowledge of evil. [illegible] confess that the book has made me ashamed of mys[illegible] *Jane Eyre* I hardly looked into, very seldom reading

work of fiction—yours, indeed, and Thackeray's, are the only ones I care to open. *Shirley* disgusted me at the opening, and I gave up the writer and her books with a notion that she was a person who liked coarseness. How I misjudged her! and how thankful I am that I never put a word of my misconceptions into print, or recorded my misjudgments of one who is a whole heaven above me.

'Well have you done your work, and given us the picture of a valiant woman made perfect by suffering. I shall now read carefully and lovingly every word she has written, especially those poems, which ought not to have fallen dead as they did, and which seem to be (from a review in the current *Fraser*) of remarkable strength and purity.'

It was a short-lived triumph, however, and Mrs. Gaskell soon found herself, as she expressed it, 'in a veritable hornet's nest.' Mr. Brontë, to begin with, did not care for the references to himself and the suggestion that he had treated his wife unkindly, although it is clear from the correspondence that he did not find anything wrong on his first perusal of the book. Mrs. Gaskell had associated him with numerous eccentricities and ebullitions of temper, which during his later years he always asserted, and undoubtedly with perfect truth, were, at the best, the fabrications of a dismissed servant. Mr. Nicholls had also his grievance. There was just a suspicion implied that he had not been quite the most sympathetic of husbands. The suspicion was absolutely ill-founded, and arose from Mr. Nicholls's intense shyness. But neither Mr. Brontë nor Mr. Nicholls gave Mrs. Gaskell much trouble. They, at any rate, were silent. Trouble, however, came from many quarters. Yorkshire people resented the air of patronage with which, as it seemed to them, a good Lancashire lady had taken their county in hand. They were not quite the backward savages, they retorted, which some of Mrs. Gaskell's descriptions in the beginning of her

book would seem to suggest. Between Lancashire and Yorkshire there is always a suspicion of jealousy. It was intensified for the moment by these sombre pictures of 'this lawless, yet not unkindly population.'[1] A son-in-law of Mr. Redhead wrote to deny the account of that clergyman's association with Haworth. 'He gives another as true,' wrote Mrs. Gaskell, 'in which I don't see any great difference.' Miss Martineau wrote sheet after sheet explanatory of her relations with Charlotte Brontë. 'Two separate householders in London *each* declare that the first interview between Miss Brontë and Miss Martineau took place at *her* house,' is another of Mrs. Gaskell's despairing cries. In one passage Mrs. Gaskell had spoken of wasteful young servants, and the young servants in question came upon Mr. Brontë for the following testimonial:—

HAWORTH, *August 17th*, 1857.

I beg leave to state to all whom it may concern, that Nancy and Sarah Garrs, during the time they were in my service, were kind to my children, and honest, and not wasteful, but sufficiently careful in regard to food, and all other articles committed to their charge.

P. BRONTË, A.B.,
Incumbent of Haworth, Yorkshire.

Three whole pages were devoted to the dramatic recital of a scandal at Haworth, and this entirely disappears from the third edition. A casual reference to a girl who had been seduced, and had found a friend in Miss Brontë, gave further trouble. 'I have altered the word "seduced" to "betrayed,"' writes Mrs. Gaskell to Martha Brown, 'and I hope that this will satisfy the unhappy girl's friends.' But all these were small matters compared with the Cowan Bridge controversy and the threatened legal proceedings over Branwell Brontë's suggested love affairs. Mrs.

[1] 'Some of the West Ridingers are very angry, and declare they are half a century in civilisation before some of the Lancashire folk, and that this neighbourhood is a paradise compared with some districts not far from Manchester.'—Ellen Nussey to Mrs. Gaskell, April 16th, 1859.

Gaskell defended the description in *Jane Eyre* of Cowan Bridge with peculiar vigour. Mr. Carus Wilson, the Brocklehurst of *Jane Eyre*, and his friends were furious. They threatened an action. There were letters in the *Times* and letters in the *Daily News*. Mr. Nicholls broke silence—the only time that he did so during the forty years that followed his wife's death—with two admirable letters to the *Halifax Guardian*.[1] The Cowan Bridge controversy was a drawn battle, in spite of numerous and glowing testimonials to the virtues of Mr. Carus Wilson. Most people who know anything of the average private schools of half a century ago are satisfied that Charlotte Brontë's description was substantially correct. 'I want to show you many letters,' writes Mrs. Gaskell, 'most of them praising the character of our dear friend as she deserves, and from people whose opinion she would have cared for, such as the Duke of Argyll, Kingsley, Greg, etc. Many abusing me. I should think seven or eight of this kind from the Carus Wilson clique.'

The Branwell matter was more serious. Here Mrs. Gaskell had, indeed, shown a singular recklessness. The lady referred to by Branwell was Mrs. Robinson, the wife of the Rev. Edmund Robinson of Thorp Green, and afterwards Lady Scott. Anne Brontë was governess in her family for four years, and Branwell tutor to the son for about two. Branwell, under the influence of opium, made certain statements about his relations with Mrs. Robinson which have been effectually disproved, although they were implicitly believed by the Brontë girls, who, womanlike, were naturally ready to regard a woman as the ruin of a beloved brother. The recklessness of Mrs. Gaskell in accepting such inadequate testimony can be explained only on the assumption that she had a novelist's satisfaction in the romance which the 'bad woman' theory supplied. She wasted a considerable amount of rhetoric upon it. 'When the fatal attack came on,' she says, 'his

[1] See Appendix VIII.

pockets were found filled with old letters from the woman to whom he was attached. He died! she lives still—in Mayfair. I see her name in county papers, as one of those who patronise the Christmas balls; and I hear of her in London drawing-rooms'—and so on. There were no love-letters found in Branwell Brontë's pockets.[1] When Mrs. Gaskell's husband came post-haste to Haworth to ask for proofs of Mrs. Robinson's complicity in Branwell's downfall, none were obtainable. I was assured by the late Sir Leslie Stephen that his father, Sir James Stephen, was employed at the time to make careful inquiry, and that he and other eminent lawyers came to the conclusion that it was one long tissue of lies or hallucinations.[2] The subject is sufficiently sordid, and indeed almost redundant in any biography of the Brontës; but it is of moment, because Charlotte Brontë and her sisters were so thoroughly persuaded that a woman was at the bottom of their brother's ruin; and this belief Charlotte impressed upon all the friends who were nearest and dearest to her. Her letters at the time of her brother's death are full of censure of the supposed wickedness of another. Here, Mrs. Gaskell did not show the caution which a masculine biographer, less prone to take literally a man's accounts of his amours, would undoubtedly have displayed. Indeed she told Miss Nussey that she intended to revenge the wrongs of the Brontës upon 'that woman' —an admirable piece of chivalry if she had been sure of her facts.

Yet, when all is said, Mrs. Gaskell had done her work

[1] 'To this bold statement (*i.e.* that love-letters were found in Branwell's pockets) Martha Brown gave to me a flat contradiction, declaring that she was employed in the sick-room at the time, and had personal knowledge that not one letter, nor a vestige of one, from the lady in question, was so found.'—Leyland, *The Brontë Family*, vol. ii. p. 284.

[2] Mr. Nicholls believed the story to have had some truth in it, as he could not otherwise account for Anne's acceptance of her brother's version of the affair, she being at the time in the same family. The probable explanation is that Anne failed to understand and to accept at its true worth Mrs. Robinson's irresponsible flirtation with her brother. Mrs. Robinson was probably laughing at Branwell all the time.

as thoroughly and well as the documents before her permitted. Lockhart's *Scott* and Froude's *Carlyle* are examples of great biographies which called for abundant censure upon their publication; yet both these books will live as classics of their kind. To be interesting, it is perhaps indispensable that the biographer should be indiscreet, and certainly the Branwell incident—a matter of two or three pages—is the only part of Mrs. Gaskell's biography in which indiscretion becomes indefensible. And for this she suffered cruelly. 'I did so try to tell the truth,' she said to a friend, 'and I believe *now* I hit as near to the truth as any one could do.' 'I weighed every line with my whole power and heart,' she said on another occasion, 'so that every line should go to its great purpose of making *her* known and valued, as one who had gone through such a terrible life with a brave and faithful heart.' And that clearly Mrs. Gaskell succeeded in doing. It is quite certain that Charlotte Brontë would not stand on so splendid a pedestal to-day but for the single-minded devotion of her accomplished biographer.

It has sometimes been implied that the portrait drawn by Mrs. Gaskell was far too sombre, that there are passages in Charlotte's letters which show that ofttimes her heart was merry and her life sufficiently cheerful. That there were long periods of gaiety for all the three sisters, surely no one ever doubted. To few people, fortunately, is it given to have lives wholly without happiness. And now, when this is acknowledged, how can one say that the picture was too gloomy? Taken as a whole, the life of Charlotte Brontë was among the saddest in literature. At a miserable school, where she herself was unhappy, she saw her two elder sisters stricken down and carried home to die. In her home was the narrowest poverty. She got, in the years when that was most essential, no mother's love; and perhaps there was a somewhat too rigid disciplinarian in the aunt who took the mother's place. Her

second school brought her, indeed, two kind friends; but her shyness made that school-life in itself a prolonged tragedy. Of the two experiences as a private governess I shall have more to say. They were periods of torture to her sensitive nature. The ambition of the three girls to start a school on their own account failed ignominiously. The suppressed vitality of childhood and early womanhood made Charlotte unable to enter with sympathy and toleration into the life of a foreign city, and Brussels was for her a further disaster. Then within two years, just as literary fame was bringing its consolation for the trials of the past, she saw her two beloved sisters taken from her. And, finally, when at last a good man won her love, there were left to her only nine months of happy married life. 'I am not going to die. We have been so happy.' These words to her husband on her death-bed are not the least piteously sad in her tragic story. That her life was a tragedy, was the opinion of the woman friend with whom on the intellectual side she had most in common. Miss Mary Taylor wrote to Mrs. Gaskell the following letter from New Zealand upon receipt of the *Life*:—

WELLINGTON, 30*th July* 185[illegible]

MY DEAR MRS. GASKELL,—I am unaccountably in receipt by post of two vols. containing the Life of C. Brontë. I have pleasure in attributing this compliment to you; I beg, therefore, to thank you for them. The book is a perfect success, in giving a true picture of a melancholy life, and you have practically answered my puzzle as to how you would give an account of her, not being at liberty to give a true description of those around. Though not so gloomy as the truth, it is perhaps as much so as people will accept without calling it exaggerated, and feeling the desire to doubt and contradict it. I have seen two reviews of it. One of them sums it up as 'a life of poverty and self-suppression,' the other has nothing to the purpose at all. Neither of them seems to think it a strange or wrong state of things that a woman of first-rate talents, industry, and integrity should live all her life in a walking nightmare of 'poverty and self-suppression.' I doubt whether any of them will.

It must upset most people's notions of beauty to be told that the portrait at the beginning is that of an ugly woman.[1] I do not altogether like the idea of publishing a flattered likeness. I had rather the mouth and eyes had been nearer together, and shown the veritable square face and large disproportionate nose.

I had the impression that Cartwright's mill was burnt in 1820, not in 1812. You give much too favourable an account of the black-coated and Tory savages that kept the people down, and provoked excesses in those days. Old Roberson said he 'would wade to the knees in blood rather than the then state of things should be altered,'—a state including Corn law, Test law, and a host of other oppressions.

Once more I thank you for the book—the first copy, I believe, that arrived in New Zealand.—Sincerely yours,

MARY TAYLOR.

And in another letter, written a little later (28th January 1858), Miss Mary Taylor writes to Miss Ellen Nussey in similar strain:—

'Your account of Mrs. Gaskell's book was very interesting,' she says. 'She seems a hasty, impulsive person, and the needful drawing back after her warmth gives her an inconsistent look. Yet I doubt not her book will be of great use. You must be aware that many strange notions as to the kind of person Charlotte really was will be done away with by a knowledge of the true facts of her life. I have heard imperfectly of farther printing on the subject. As to the mutilated edition that is to come, I am sorry for it. Libellous or not, the first edition was all true, and except the declamation all, in my opinion, useful to be published. Of course I don't know how far necessity may make Mrs. Gaskell give them up. You know one dare not always say the world moves.'

We who do know the whole story in fullest detail will understand that it was desirable to 'mutilate' the book, and that, indeed, truth did in some measure require

[1] Mrs. Gaskell had described Charlotte Brontë's features as 'plain, large, and ill-set,' and had written of her 'crooked mouth and large nose'—while acknowledging the beauty of hair and eyes.

it. But with these letters of Mary Taylor's before us, let us not hear again that the story of Charlotte Brontë's life was not, in its main features, accurately and adequately told by her gifted biographer.

Why then, I am naturally asked, add one further book to the Brontë biographical literature? The reply is, I hope, sufficient. Fifty years have gone by, and they have been years of growing interest in the subject. In the year 1895 ten thousand people visited the Brontë Museum at Haworth. Interesting books have been written, notably Sir Wemyss Reid's *monograph* and Mr. Leyland's *The Brontë Family*, but they have gone out of print. Dozens of letters and many new facts have come to light, and details, which seemed too trivial in 1857, are of sufficient importance to-day; facts which were rightly suppressed then may honestly and honourably be given to the public at an interval of half a century. Added to all this, fortune has been kind to me.

Some thirteen or fourteen years ago the late Miss Ellen Nussey placed in my hands a printed volume of some 400 pages, which bore no publisher's name, but contained upon its title-page the statement that it was *The Story of Charlotte Brontë's Life, as told through her Letters.* These are the Letters which Miss Nussey had lent to Mrs. Gaskell and to Sir Wemyss Reid. Of these letters Mrs. Gaskell published about 100, and Sir Wemyss Reid added a few more. It was explained to me that the volume had been privately printed by Mr. J. Horsfall Turner of Idle, Bradford, under a misconception, and that only some dozen copies were extant. Miss Nussey asked me if I would write something around what might remain of the unpublished letters, and if I saw my way to do anything which would add to the public appreciation of the friend who from early childhood un-
then had been the most absorbing interest of her l
A careful study of the volume made it perfectly cl

to me that there were still some letters which might with advantage be added to the Brontë story, although Mr. Augustine Birrell had advised to the contrary, and Mr. John Morley declined, on behalf of Messrs. Macmillan, to accept a book on the subject. At the same time arose the possibility of a veto being placed upon the publication of these letters. An examination of Charlotte Brontë's will, which was proved at York by her husband in 1855, suggested an easy way out of the difficulty. I made up my mind to try and see Mr. Nicholls. I had heard of his disinclination to be in any way associated with the controversy which had gathered round his wife for all these years; but I wrote to him nevertheless, and received a cordial invitation to visit him in his Irish home.

It was exactly forty years to a day after Charlotte died—March 31st, 1895—when I alighted at the station in the quiet little town of Banagher in Ireland, to receive the cordial handclasp of the man into whose keeping Charlotte Brontë had given her life. It was one of many visits, and the beginning of an interesting correspondence. Mr. Nicholls placed all the papers in his possession in my hands. They were more varied and more abundant than I could possibly have anticipated. They included countless manuscripts written in childhood, and bundles of letters. Here were the letters Charlotte Brontë had written to her family during her second sojourn in Brussels—to 'Dear Branwell' and 'Dear E. J.,' as she calls Emily Jane Brontë—letters that even to handle was calculated to give a thrill to the Brontë enthusiast. Here also were the love-letters of Maria Branwell to her lover Patrick Brontë, which were referred to in Mrs. Gaskell's biography, but had never hitherto been printed.

'The four small scraps of Emily and Anne's manuscript,' writes Mr. Nicholls, 'I accidentally found squeezed into the box I send you. They are sad reading, poor girls! others I found in the bottom of a cupboard tied up in

a newspaper, where they had lain for nearly thirty years, and where, had it not been for your visit, they must have remained during my lifetime, and most likely afterwards have been destroyed.'

Some slight extracts from Brontë letters in *Macmillan's Magazine*, signed 'E. Baumer Williams,' brought me into communication with a gifted daughter of Mr. W. S. Williams, who had first discovered the merit of the novelist. Mrs. Williams and her husband generously placed the whole series of these letters of Charlotte Brontë to their father at my disposal. It was of some of these letters that Mrs. Gaskell wrote in enthusiastic terms when she had read them, and she was only permitted to see a few. Then I have to thank Mr. Joshua Taylor, the nephew of Miss Mary Taylor, for permission to publish his aunt's letters.[1] Mr. James Taylor,[2] again, who wanted to marry Charlotte Brontë, and who died twenty years afterwards in Bombay, left behind him a bundle of letters which I found in the possession of a relative in the north of London.[3] I discovered through a letter addressed to Miss Nussey that the 'Brussels friend' referred to by Mrs. Gaskell was a Miss Lætitia Wheelwright, and I determined to write to all the Wheelwrights in the London Directory. My first effort succeeded, and *the* Miss Wheelwright kindly lent me all the letters that she had preserved. It is scarcely possible that time will reveal any more unpublished letters from the author of *Jane Eyre*. Several of those already in print are forgeries, and I have already seen a letter addressed from Paris, a city which Miss Brontë never visited. I have the assurance of Dr. Héger of Brussels that Miss Brontë's correspondence with his father no longer exists.

[1] Some extracts from which were printed in my *Charlotte Brontë and Her Ci*[illegible] They are given here in their entirety.

[2] Who was in no way related to Mary Taylor and her family

[3] Mrs. Lawry of Muswell Hill, to whose courtesy in placing these and othe[illegible] at my disposal I am greatly indebted. These letters were afterwards purchased b[illegible] Thomas Wise.

CHAPTER I

PATRICK BRONTË AND MARIA HIS WIFE

It would seem quite clear to any careful investigator that the Reverend Patrick Brontë, Incumbent of Haworth, and the father of three famous daughters, was a much maligned man. We talk of the fierce light which beats upon a throne, but what is that compared to the fierce light which beats upon any man of some measure of individuality who is destined to live out his life in the quiet of a country village—in the very centre, as it were, of 'personal talk' and gossip not always kindly to the stranger within the gate? The view of Mr. Brontë, presented by Mrs. Gaskell in the early editions of her biography of Charlotte Brontë, is that of a severe, ill-tempered, and distinctly disagreeable character. It is the picture of a man who disliked the vanities of life so intensely, that the new shoes of his children and the silk dress of his wife were not spared by him in sudden gusts of passion. A stern old ruffian, one is inclined to consider him. His pistol-shooting rings picturesquely, but not agreeably, through Mrs. Gaskell's memoir. It has been explained already in more than one quarter that this was not the real Patrick Brontë, and that much of the unfavourable gossip was due to the chatter of a dismissed servant, retailed to Mrs. Gaskell on one of her missions of inquiry in the neighbourhood. The stories of the burnt shoes and the mutilated dress have been relegated to the realm of myth, and the pistol-shooting may now be acknowledged as a harmless pastime not more iniquitous than the golfing or angling of a latter-day

clergyman. It is certain, were the matter of much interest to-day, that Mr. Brontë was fond of the use of firearms. The late Incumbent of Haworth[1] pointed out to me, on the old tower of Haworth Church, the marks of pistol bullets, which he had been assured were made by Mr. Brontë. I have myself handled both the gun and the pistols—these latter very ornamental weapons, by the way, manufactured at Bradford—which Mr. Brontë possessed during the later years of his life.[2] From them he had obtained much innocent amusement; but his son-in-law, Mr. Nicholls, who, up to the day of his death, professed a reverent and enthusiastic affection for old Mr. Brontë, informed me that the bullet marks upon Haworth Church were the irresponsible frolic of the curate—Mr. Smith. It does not much matter. All this is trivial enough in any case, and one turns very readily to more important factors in the life of the father of the Brontës.

Patrick Brontë was born in a cottage in Emdale, in the parish of Drumballyroney, County Down, in Ireland, on St. Patrick's Day, March 17, 1777. He was one of the ten children of Hugh Brunty, farmer, and his nine brothers and sisters seem all of them to have spent their lives in their Irish home, and most of them to have married and been given in marriage, and to have gone to their graves in peace.[3] The mother, Eleanor M'Clory, had been brought up a

[1] The late Rev. John Wade, who occupied the parsonage at Haworth from the death of Mr. Brontë in 1861 until 1898, when he resigned.

[2] The pistols were sold at Sotheby's Sale Rooms, London, on July 26, 1907.

[3] William, the second son, was baptized on the 16th March 1779. Hugh, the third son, on the 27th May 1781. James, the fourth son, on the 3rd November 1783. Welsh or Walsh, the fifth son, on the 19th February 1786. Jane, the eldest daughter and sixth child, on the 1st February 1789. Mary, the seventh child, on the 1st May 1791. The register containing the names of Patrick, Rose, Sarah and Alice, the remainder of the family, was destroyed.—Wright's *The Brontës in Ireland*. Mr. Horsfall Turner shows (*Patrick Brontë's Collected Works*) that the name is spelt 'Brunty' in all these six entries in Drumgooland Parish Register. James Brunty or Brontë, who died a bachelor at the age of 87, is said to have visited Haworth and to have spoken of his niece Charlotte as 'terrible sharp and inquisitive.' The ultimate destination of P[illegible] Brontë's nine brothers and sisters is carefully traced by Mr. Horsfall Turner in his *Patrick Brontë's Collected Works*. All the brothers died in Ireland.

Roman Catholic, but became a Protestant at her marriage. Patrick alone of the family had ambition, and, one must add, the opportune friend, without whom ambition counts for little in the struggle of life. After a brief period of schooling, he became a weaver, the principal industry of the district, but at sixteen we meet him as a teacher, first at the Glascar Hill Presbyterian School, about a mile from the Brunty cottage at Emdale, and later—probably in 1798—at the school connected with the Parish Church of Drumballyroney, this new post involving a transfer of allegiance to the Episcopal Faith.

It was at Drumballyroney, it is believed, that he saved the hundred pounds or so which enabled him at the age of twenty-five, incited thereto by the vicar of his parish, Mr. Tighe, to leave Ireland for St. John's College, Cambridge. In 1802 Patrick Brontë went to Cambridge, and entered his name in the college books. There, indeed, we find the name, not of Patrick Brontë, but of Patrick Branty,[1] and this brings us to an interesting point as to the origin of the name. In the register of baptisms his name is entered, as are those of his brothers and sisters, as 'Brunty' and 'Bruntee'; and it can scarcely be doubted that, as Dr. Douglas Hyde has pointed out, the original name was O'Prunty.[2] The Irish,

[1] 'Patrick Branty' is written in another handwriting in the list of admissions at St. John's College, Cambridge. Dr. J. A. Erskine Stuart, who has a valuable note on the subject in an article on 'The Brontë Nomenclature' (Brontë Society's Publications, Pt. III.), has found the name as Brunty, Bruntee, Bronty, and Branty—but never in Patrick Brontë's handwriting. There is, however, no signature of Mr. Brontë's extant prior to 1799. His own signatures showed a gradual evolution, however. His matriculation signature—the first we have—is 'Patr. Bronte' without the diæresis; at Wethersfield he signed Bronté; at Dewsbury, 'Brontë' or 'Bronté.' Not until he arrived at Haworth do we find his signature as Brontë.

[2] 'I translated this' (*i.e.* an Irish romance) 'from a manuscript in my possession made by one Patrick O'Prunty, an ancestor probably of Charlotte Brontë, in 1763.' —*The Story of Early Gaelic Literature*, p. 49. By Douglas Hyde, 1895. It is an interesting fact that Mr. Brontë was not the first of his own family with an inclination for writing. Dr. Hyde has in his possession a manuscript volume in the Irish language, written by one Patrick O'Prunty in 1763. Patrick O'Prunty was, I should imagine, an [illegible] brother of Mr. Brontë's father. The little book was called *The Adventures of the*

at the beginning of the century, were well-nigh as primitive in such matters as were the English of a century earlier; and one is not surprised to see variations in the spelling of the Brontë name—it being in the case of his brothers and sisters occasionally spelt 'Brontee.' To me it is clear that for the change of name Lord Nelson was responsible, and that the dukedom of Bronte, which was conferred upon the great sailor in 1799, suggested the more ornamental surname. There were no Irish Brontës in existence before Nelson became Duke of Bronte; but all Patrick's brothers and sisters, with whom, it must be remembered, he was on terms of correspondence his whole life long, gradually, with a true Celtic sense of the picturesqueness of the thing, seized upon the more attractive surname. For this theory there is, of course, not one scrap of evidence; we only know that the registers which record the baptism of Patrick's brothers and sisters give us Brunty, and that his own signature through his successive curacies is Bronte, with various modifications of the accent on the final e.

From Cambridge, after taking orders in 1806, Mr. Brontë moved to a curacy at Wethersfield in Essex; and Mr. Augustine Birrell has told us[1] how the good-looking Irish

Son of Ice Counsel, and there is a colophon of which Dr. Hyde sends me the original and a translation; he also sends me the first quatrain of Patrick O'Prunty's poem:—

Colophon to the Adventures of the Son of Ice Counsel.

Guidhim beannocht gach léightheora a n-anóir na Trionoite agas na h-óighe Muine air an sgribhneóir Pádruig ua Pronntuidh mhic Néill, mhic Seathain, etc. April ye 20, 1763.

I pray the blessing of each reader in honour of the Trinity and of the Virgin Mary on the writer, that is Patrick O'Prunty, son of Niall, son of Seathan, etc. April ye 20, 1763.

First Quatrain of Patrick O'Prunty's poem.

Nochad millean fáilte fior
Uaim do theachta an áirdriogh
Tháinic chugainn anois go mbuaidh
Na stiughraighthóir os cionn priomhshluagh.

Ninety millions of true welcomes
From me to the coming of the high King
Who is come to us now with victory
As a guide over the chief-hosts.

[1] In his *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, published by Walter Scott in 1887.

curate made successful love to a young parishioner—Miss Mary Burder, he having lodged at the house of Miss Burder's aunt, Miss Mildred Davy. Mary Burder would have married him, it seems, but for an obdurate uncle and guardian. She was spirited away from the neighbourhood, and the lovers never met again. Mary Burder, as the wife of a Nonconformist minister named Silree, died in 1866, in her seventy-seventh year. This lady, from whom doubtless either directly or indirectly the story was obtained, may have amplified and exaggerated a very mild flirtation. One would like further evidence for the statement that when Mr. Brontë lost his wife in 1821 he asked his old sweetheart, Mary Burder, to become the mother of his six children, and that she answered 'no.' In any case, Mr. Brontë left Wethersfield early in 1809 for a curacy at Wellington, in Shropshire, where John Eyton was vicar.[1] Near by at Shrewsbury an old friend of St. John's College days, John Nunn, was a curate.[2] Hence probably the recommendation. The Wellington curacy lasted only a few months, however, and at the end of this year, 1809, we find Mr. Brontë in Yorkshire—at Dewsbury. His new vicar, Mr. Buckmaster, had some title to fame as a hymn-writer,[3] but he will interest the lover of Cowper the poet in that he was the successor to

[1] John Eyton's son, Robert William Eyton, the antiquary and county historian, was born in the vicarage at Wellington in 1815.

[2] A sequel to this friendship belonging to fifty years later is contained in a letter sent to me by Mr. Nunn's niece, who writes:

'In 1[illegible] I was staying with Mr. Nunn at Thorndon, in Suffolk, of which place he was rector. The good m[illegible]d had never read a novel in his life, and of course had never heard of the famous Brontë books. I was [illegible]ing Mrs. Gaskell's *Life* with absorbed interest, and one day my uncle said, "I have heard lately [illegible]ne mentioned with which I was well familiar. What is it all about?" He was told, when he added, "Patrick Brontë was once my greatest friend." Next morning my uncle brought out a thick bundle [illegible] letters and said, "These were written by Patrick Brontë. They refer to his spiritual state. I have rea[illegible] them once more, and now I destroy them."'

[3] Among the contents of Mr. Brontë's library, sold at Sotheby's in 1907, was a book entitle[illegible]:

'A S[illegible]ies of Discourses containing a System of Devotional, Experimental, and Practical Religion, partic[illegible]arly calculated for the Use of Families. Preached at the Parish Church of Dewsbury, York[illegible] [illegible] the Rev. J. Buckmaster, A.M., Vicar, Wakefield. Published by E. Waller.'

[illegible] it was inscribed, 'To the Rev. P. Brontë, A.M., A Testimonial of Sincere Esteem [illegible] the Author.'

Cowper's friend and correspondent, Matthew Powley, the husband of Mary Unwin's only daughter.[1]

What little we know of Mr. Brontë's sojourn in Dewsbury is due to the researches of Mr. W. W. Yates of that town.[2] It is practically covered by three incidents. One of them tells of a visit of the curate with the children of the Sunday-school from Dewsbury to Earlsheaton, a neighbouring village. In presence of an offensive bully Mr. Brontë showed great courage, seized the man who blocked the path and threw him on one side. The story was used by Charlotte Brontë in *Shirley*. A second incident is that of the intervention of Mr. Brontë in coming forward to support a young man named William Nowell, who was wrongfully charged with deserting after taking the King's shilling. He was brought before a magistrate and sentenced to imprisonment. Mr. Brontë and others agitated with the result that Nowell was released and the man, James Thackeray, who had charged Nowell with enlisting, was tried for perjury and sentenced to seven years' transportation. Mr. Brontë took a considerable part in agitating for the release of Nowell and for bringing his accuser to trial. A letter signed 'Palmerston'[3] from the War Office is extant, addressed to Mr. Brontë in answer to a memorial from him on the subject. Mr. Brontë took up Nowell's case in the *Leeds Mercury*, where then and afterwards he wrote under the pseudonym of 'Sydney.' A third episode is concerned with Mr. Brontë's leaving Dewsbury. It is recorded that he declined to preach again after hearing the remark of a churchwarden, that Mr. Buckmaster should not 'keep a dog and bark himself'—in other words, that the vicar should not preach

[1] The Rev. Matthew Powley died in 1806 as vicar of Dewsbury; his wife, Mary Powley, died in 1835, aged eighty-nine.

[2] *The Father of the Brontës: His Life and Work at Dewsbury and Hartshead*, by W. W. Yates. Leeds: Fred R. Spark and Son, 1897.

[3] Palmerston was at St. John's College, Cambridge, from April 1803 to January 1806, but it is improbable that the future Minister of State and Mr. Brontë were ever on speaking terms.

and pay a curate for preaching. He solemnly announced this grievance, it is said, from the pulpit, and departed from Dewsbury, Mr. Buckmaster, however, assisting him to a new curacy at Hartshead.

Mr. Brontë's next curacy was obtained in 1811, by a removal to Hartshead, near Huddersfield. Here, in 1812, when thirty-five years of age, he married Miss Maria Branwell, of Penzance.[1] Miss Branwell had only a few months before left her Cornish home for a visit to an uncle in Yorkshire. This uncle was a Mr. John Fennell, a Methodist Local Preacher, and Governor of Woodhouse Grove Wesleyan Academy.[2] To Methodism, indeed, the Cornish Branwells would seem to have been devoted at one time or another, for I have seen a copy of the *Imitation* inscribed 'M. Branwell, July 1807,' with the following title-page:—

> AN EXTRACT OF THE CHRISTIAN'S PATTERN: OR, A TREATISE ON THE IMITATION OF CHRIST. WRITTEN IN LATIN BY THOMAS À KEMPIS. ABRIDGED AND PUBLISHED IN ENGLISH BY JOHN WESLEY, M.A., LONDON. PRINTED AT THE CONFERENCE OFFICE, NORTH GREEN, FINSBURY SQUARE. G. STORY, AGENT. SOLD BY G. WHITFIELD, CITY ROAD. 1803. PRICE BOUND 1S.

[1] The Branwells.—Maria Branwell's father, Thomas Branwell, was 'Assistant' to the Corporation of Penzance, that is, a Councillor. He married Anne Carne, and they and many of their children were buried in a vault in the Churchyard of St. Mary's, Penzance. The vault is marked 'T. B., 1808.' Thomas Branwell was married in Penzance, November 28, 1768, and died in 1808; his wife died in 1809. They had one son, Benjamin Carne Branwell, born 1775, who became Mayor of Penzance in 1809, and [illegible] daughters—Mrs. Brontë, Miss Elizabeth Branwell, Mrs. Branwell (Charlotte, who married her cousin Joseph Branwell, and thus did not change her name), Mrs. Kingston (A[illegible]), whose one daughter, Elizabeth Jane, died in Penzance in 1878, and two others.

[2] Woodhouse Grove School was opened in 1812, Mr. John Fennell being appointed its first Governor, the only layman who ever occupied that post. He was also the first Head-master, and his wife was 'Governess' (*i.e.* Matron) of the school, their joint salary amounting to £100 per annum. Mr. Brontë conducted the first examination of the boys of Woodhouse Grove School. Mr. Fennell was a year there, and after another twelvemonth's preparation he was ordained a curate, his first curacy being at Bradford Parish Church, where, on the 23rd June 1816, he preached the funeral sermon on the death of Vicar Crosse.—Charles A. Federer in the *Yorkshire Daily Observer*, July 30, 1907.

The book was evidently brought by Mrs. Brontë from Penzance, and given by her to her husband or left among her effects. The poor little woman had been in her grave for nearly five years when it came into the hands of one of her daughters, as we learn from Charlotte's handwriting on the fly-leaf :—

> *C. Brontë's book. This book was given to me in July* 1826. *It is not certainly known who is the author, but it is generally supposed that Thomas à Kempis is. I saw a reward of* £10,000 *offered in the* Leeds Mercury *to any one who could find out for a certainty who is the author.*

The conjunction of the names of John Wesley, Maria Branwell, and Charlotte Brontë surely gives this little volume, 'price bound 1s.,' a singular interest! The introduction of Mr. Brontë to Miss Branwell doubtless arose from his friendship with the Rev. William Morgan, who, as we shall see, was married on the same day as Mr. Brontë and also performed the ceremony for his friend. Mr. Brontë had met Mr. Morgan as a fellow-curate at Wellington, and Morgan was engaged to Miss Fennell. In Mr. Brontë's scanty library was a book entitled :

> 'Sermons or Homilies appointed to be read in Churches in the time of Queen Elizabeth of Famous Memory.' Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1802.

It bears the inscription in Mr. Brontë's handwriting :—

> The Rev. P. Brontë's Book, presented to him by his Friend W. Morgan, as a Memorial of the pleasant and agreeable friendship which subsisted between them at Wellington—and as a token of the same friendship which, as is hoped, will continue for ever.

Here I may refer to the letters which Maria Branwell wrote to her lover during the brief courtship. Mrs. Gaskell, it will be remembered, makes but one extract from this correspondence, which was handed to her by Mr. Brontë as part of the material for her memoir. Long years before, the little packet had been taken from

Mr. Brontë's desk, for we find Charlotte writing to Miss Nussey on February 16th, 1850:—

A few days since, a little incident happened which curiously touched me. Papa put into my hands a little packet of letters and papers, telling me that they were mamma's, and that I might read them. I did read them, in a frame of mind I cannot describe. The papers were yellow with time, all having been written before I was born. It was strange now to peruse, for the first time, the records of a mind whence my own sprang; and most strange, and at once sad and sweet, to find that mind of a truly fine, pure, and elevated order. They were written to papa before they were married. There is a rectitude, a refinement, a constancy, a modesty, a sense, a gentleness about them indescribable. I wish she had lived, and that I had known her.

Yet another forty years or so and the little packet came into my possession. Handling, with a full sense of their sacredness, these letters, written more than ninety years ago by a good woman to her lover, one is tempted to hope that there is no breach of the privacy which should, even in our day, guide certain sides of life, in publishing the correspondence in its completeness. With the letters I find a little MS., which is also of pathetic interest. It is entitled 'The Advantages of Poverty in Religious Concerns,' and it is endorsed in the handwriting of Mr. Brontë, written, doubtless, many years afterwards:—

The above was written by my dear wife, and is for insertion in one of the periodical publications. Keep it as a memorial of her.

There is no reason to suppose that the MS. was ever published; there is no reason why any editor should have wished to publish it. It abounds in the obvious.[1] At the same time, one notes that from both father and mother alike Charlotte Brontë and her sisters inherited some measure of the literary faculty. It is nothing to say that not one line of her father's or mother's would have been

[1] Acting upon the desire of the publishers to preserve every possible memorial of the Brontës in these pages, I print the essay in Appendix I.

preserved had it not been for their gifted children. It is sufficient that the zest for writing was there, and that the intense passion for handling a pen, which seems to have been singularly strong in Charlotte Brontë, must have come to a great extent from a similar passion alike in father and mother. Mr. Brontë, indeed, may be counted a prolific author. He published, in all, four books, three pamphlets, and two sermons. Of his books, two were in verse and two in prose. *Cottage Poems*[1] was published in 1811; *The Rural Minstrel*[2] in 1813; *The Cottage in the Wood*[3] in 1815; and *The Maid of Killarney*[4] in 1818. After his wife's death he published no more books, but only occasional sermons and pamphlets.[5] Reading over these old-fashioned volumes now, one admits that they

[1] *Cottage Poems*, by the Rev. Patrick Brontë, B.A., Minister of Hartshead-cum-Clifton, near Leeds, Yorkshire. Halifax: Printed and sold by P. K. Holden for the Author. Sold also by B. Crosby and Co., Stationers' Court, London; F. Houlston and Son, Wellington; and by the Booksellers of Halifax, Leeds, York, etc. 1811.

[2] *The Rural Minstrel:* A Miscellany of Descriptive Poems. By the Rev. P. Brontë, A.B., Minister of Hartshead-cum-Clifton, near Leeds, Yorkshire. Halifax: Printed and sold by P. K. Holden for the Author. Sold also by B. and R. Crosby and Co., Stationers' Court, London. And by all other Booksellers. 1813.

[3] *The Cottage in the Wood; or, the Art of Becoming Rich and Happy*, by the Rev. P. Brontë, A.B., Minister of Thornton, Bradford, Yorkshire. Bradford, printed and sold by T. Inkersley. Sold also by Sherwood and Co., London; Robinson and Co., Leeds; Holden, Halifax; J. Hurst, Wakefield; and all other Booksellers. 1815.

[4] *The Maid of Killarney; or, Albion and Flora:* A Modern Tale; in which are interwoven some cursory remarks on Religion and Politics. London, printed by Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, Paternoster Row. Sold also by T. Inkersley, Bradford; Robinson and Co., Leeds; and all other Booksellers. 1818.

[5] Mr. Brontë's other works were:—

1. *The Phenomenon; or, An Account in Verse of the Extraordinary Disruption of a Bog which took Place in the Moors of Haworth on the* 12*th day of September* 1824: Intended as a Reward Book for the Higher Classes in Sunday-schools. By the Rev. P. Brontë, M.A., Incumbent of Haworth, near Keighley, Bradford. Printed and sold by T. Inkersley, Bridge Street; and by F. Westley, Stationers' Court, London. 1824. Price Twopence.

2. *A Sermon:* Preached in the Church of Haworth on Sunday the 1[illegible] day of September 1824, in reference to an Earthquake and Extraordinary Erupti[illegible] of Mud and Water that had taken Place ten days before in the Moss of that Chapel[illegible] By the Rev. Patrick Brontë, A.B., Incumbent of Haworth, near Keighley, Bradford[illegible] Printed and sold by T. Inkersley, Bridge Street; and all other Booksellers. 18[illegible]4. Price Sixpence.

3. *The Signs of the Times; or, A Familiar Treatise on some Political Indications in the Year* 1835. By P. Brontë, A.B., Incumbent of Haworth, near Bradford, Yorkshire.

possess but little distinction. It has been pointed out, indeed, that one of the strongest lines in *Jane Eyre*—'To the finest fibre of my nature, sir.'—is culled from Mr. Brontë's verse. It is the one line of his that will live.

In 1811 Mr. Brontë published at Halifax a volume entitled *Cottage Poems*. Among its contents is 'An Epistle to the Rev. J—— B—— while journeying for the recovery of his health'—the Rev. J. B. being, of course, his Vicar. Like his daughter Charlotte, Mr. Brontë is more interesting in his prose than in his poetry. *The Cottage in the Wood; or, the Art of Becoming Rich and Happy*, is a kind of religious novel—a spiritual *Pamela*, in which the reprobate pursuer of an innocent girl ultimately becomes converted and marries her. *The Maid of Killarney; or, Albion and Flora*, is better worth reading. Under the guise of a story it has something to say on many questions of importance. We know now why Charlotte never learnt to dance until she went to Brussels, and why children's games were unknown to her, for here are many mild diatribes against dancing and card-playing. The British Constitution and the British and Foreign Bible Society receive a considerable amount of criticism. But in spite of this didactic weakness there are one or

Keighley, printed by R. Aked, Bookseller, Low Street; and sold by W. Crofts, 19 Chancery Lane, London; and all Booksellers. MDCCCXXXV.

4. *A Brief Treatise on the Best Time and Mode of Baptism*, chiefly in answer to a Tract of Peter Pontifex, also the Rev. M. S——, Baptist Minister. By P. Brontë, A.B., Incumbent of Haworth, Yorkshire. Price Threepence. Keighley, printed by R. Aked, Bookseller, Low Street. MDCCCXXXVI.

5. *A Funeral Sermon* for the late Rev. William Weightman, M.A. Preached in the Church of Haworth on Sunday the 2nd of October 1842, by the Rev. Patrick Brontë, A.B., Incumbent. The Profits, if any, to go in aid of the Sunday-school, Halifax. Printed by J. U. Walker, George Street. 1842. Price Sixpence.

All the above works have been reprinted under the title of:

'Brontëana, the Rev. Patrick Brontë, A.B. His Collected Works and Life. Edited by J. Horsfall Turner of Idle, Bradford. Bingley, printed for the Editor by T. Harrison and Sons. 1898.'

Mr. Horsfall Turner also enumerates the fugitive writings of Mr. Brontë, including contributions to the *Leeds Mercury*, the *Leeds Intelligencer*, to *The Pastoral Visitor*—a Magazine issued at Bradford by the Rev. W. Morgan, and to the *Cottage Magazine*, issued at Dewsbury by the Rev. J. Buckworth.

two pieces of really picturesque writing, notably a description of an Irish wake, and a forcible account of the defence of a house against Whiteboys.

It is true enough that these books are merely of interest to collectors and that they live only by virtue of Patrick Brontë's remarkable children. But many a prolific writer of the day passes muster as a genius among his contemporaries upon as small a talent ; and Mr. Brontë does not seem to have given himself any airs as an author. Thirty years were to elapse before there were to be any more books from this family of writers ; but *Jane Eyre* owes something, we may be sure, to *The Maid of Killarney*.

Mr. Brontë married Maria Branwell in 1812 at Guiseley Church, Yorkshire. She was in her thirtieth year, and was one of seven children—one son and six daughters —the father of whom, Mr. Thomas Branwell, had died in 1808. He was a member of the town council, or as it was then called 'Assistant to the Corporation' of Penzance, and three years before the marriage of Maria Branwell, her brother, Benjamin Carne Branwell, was Mayor of Penzance.[1] By a curious coincidence, another sister, Charlotte, was married in Penzance on the same day that Maria was married at Guiseley—the 29th of December 1812.[2] Before me are a bundle of samplers worked by four of these Branwell sisters. Maria Branwell 'ended her sampler' April the 15th, 1791, and it is inscribed with

[1] It is pointed out by 'J. H. R.' (*Yorkshire Daily Observer*, August 13, 1907) that Maria Branwell's brother could not have been at Woodhouse Grove School as sometimes stated.

[2] The late Miss Charlotte Branwell of Penzance wrote to me as follows :—'My Aunt Maria Branwell, after the death of her parents, went to Yorkshire on a visit to her relatives, where she met the Rev. Patrick Brontë. They soon became engaged to be married. Jane Fennell was previously engaged to the Rev. William Morgan. And when the time arrived for their marriage, Mr. Fennell said he should have to give his daughter and niece away, and if so, he could not marry them ; so it was arranged that Mr. Morgan should marry Mr. Brontë and Maria Branwell, and afterwards Mr. Brontë should perform the same kindly office towards Mr. Morgan and Jane Fennell. So the bridegrooms married each other and the brides acted as bridesmaids to each other. My father and mother, Joseph and Charlotte Branwell, were married at Madron, which was then the parish church of Penzance, on the same day and hour. Perhaps a similar case never happened before or since : two sisters and four first cousins being united in holy

the text, *Flee from sin as from a serpent, for if thou comest too near to it, it will bite thee. The teeth thereof are as the teeth of a lion to slay the souls of men.* Another sampler is by Elizabeth Branwell; another by Margaret, and another by Anne. These, some miniatures, and the book and papers to which I have referred, are all that remain to us as a memento of Mrs. Brontë, apart from the children that she bore to her husband. The miniatures were in the possession of Miss Charlotte Branwell, of Penzance, when they came under my notice; they are of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Branwell — Charlotte Brontë's maternal grandfather and grandmother — and of Mrs. Brontë and her sister Elizabeth Branwell as children.

To return, however, to our bundle of love-letters. Comment is needless, if indeed comment or elucidation were possible at this distance of time.

TO REV. PATRICK BRONTË, A.B., HARTSHEAD

WOOD HOUSE GROVE, *August 26th*, 1812.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—This address is sufficient to convince you that I not only permit, but approve of yours to me—I do indeed consider you as my *friend*; yet, when I consider how short a time I have had the pleasure of knowing you, I start at my own rashness, my heart fails, and did I not think that you would be disappointed and grieved at it, I believe I should be ready to spare myself the task of writing. Do not think that I am so wavering as to repent of what I have already said. No, believe me, this will never be the case, unless you give me cause for it. You need not fear that you have been mistaken in my character. If I know anything of myself, I am incapable of making an ungenerous return to the smallest degree of kindness, much less to you whose attentions and conduct have been so particularly

matrimony at one and the same time. And they were all happy marriages. Mr. Brontë was perhaps peculiar, but I have always heard my own dear mother say that he was devotedly fond of his wife, and she of him. These marriages were solemnised on the 29th of December 1812.'

Mr. Charles A. Federer (*Yorkshire Daily Observer*, August 5, 1907) notes that Mr. Fennell could not in any case have performed the ceremony, as he was not at the time ordained a priest of the Church of England.

obliging. I will frankly confess that your behaviour and what I have seen and heard of your character has excited my warmest esteem and regard, and be assured you shall never have cause to repent of any confidence you may think proper to place in me, and that it will always be my endeavour to deserve the good opinion which you have formed, although human weakness may in some instances cause me to fall short. In giving you these assurances I do not depend upon my own strength, but I look to Him who has been my unerring guide through life, and in whose continued protection and assistance I confidently trust.

I thought on you much on Sunday, and feared you would not escape the rain. I hope you do not feel any bad effects from it? My cousin wrote you on Monday and expects this afternoon to be favoured with an answer. Your letter has caused me some foolish embarrassment, tho' in pity to my feelings they have been very sparing of their raillery.

I will now candidly answer your questions. The *politeness of others* can never make me forget your kind attentions, neither can I *walk our accustomed rounds* without thinking on you, and, why should I be ashamed to add, wishing for your presence. If you knew what were my feelings whilst writing this you would pity me. I wish to write the truth and give you satisfaction, yet fear to go too far, and exceed the bounds of propriety. But whatever I may say or write I will *never deceive* you, or *exceed the truth.* If you think I have not placed the *utmost confidence* in you, consider my situation, and ask yourself if I have not confided in you sufficiently, perhaps too much. I am very sorry that you will not have this till after to-morrow, but it was out of my power to write sooner. I rely on your goodness to pardon everything in this which may appear either too free or too stiff, and beg that you will consider me as a warm and faithful friend.

My uncle, aunt, and cousin unite in kind regards.

I must now conclude with again declaring myself to be yours sincerely, MARIA BRANWELL.

TO REV. PATRICK BRONTË, A.B., HARTSHEAD

WOOD HOUSE GROVE, *September 5th*, 1812.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,—I have just received your affectionate and very welcome letter, and although I shall not be able to send this until Monday, yet I cannot deny myself the pleasure of writing a few lines this evening, no longer considering it a task,

but a pleasure, next to that of reading yours. I had the pleasure of hearing from Mr. Fennell, who was at Bradford on Thursday afternoon, that you had rested there all night. Had you proceeded, I am sure the walk would have been too much for you; such excessive fatigue, often repeated, must injure the strongest constitution. I am rejoiced to find that our forebodings were without cause. I had yesterday a letter from a very dear friend of mine, and had the satisfaction to learn by it that all at home are well. I feel with you the unspeakable obligations I am under to a merciful Providence—my heart swells with gratitude, and I feel an earnest desire that I may be enabled to make some suitable return to the Author of all my blessings. In general, I think I am enabled to cast my care upon Him, and then I experience a calm and peaceful serenity of mind which few things can destroy. In all my addresses to the throne of grace I never ask a blessing for myself but I beg the same for you, and considering the important station which you are called to fill, my prayers are proportionately fervent that you may be favoured with all the gifts and graces requisite for such a calling. O my dear friend, let us pray much that we may live lives holy and useful to each other and all around us!

Monday morn.—My cousin and I were yesterday at Calverley church, where we heard Mr. Watman preach a very excellent sermon from 'learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart.' He displayed the character of our Saviour in a most affecting and amiable light. I scarcely ever felt more charmed with his excellences, more grateful for his condescension, or more abased at my own unworthiness; but I lament that my heart is so little retentive of those pleasing and profitable impressions.

I pitied you in your solitude, and felt sorry that it was not in my power to enliven it. Have you not been too hasty in informing your friends of a certain event? Why did you not leave them to guess a little longer? I shrink from the idea of its being known to everybody. I do, indeed, *sometimes* think of you, but I will not say how often, lest I raise your vanity; and we sometimes talk of you and the doctor. But I believe I should seldom mention your name myself were it not now and then introduced by my cousin. I have never mentioned a word of what is past to anybody. Had I thought this necessary I should have requested you to do it. But I think there is no need, as by some means or other they seem to have a pretty correct notion how

matters stand betwixt us; and as their hints, etc., meet with no contradiction from me, my silence passes for confirmation. Mr. Fennell has not neglected to give me some serious and encouraging advice, and my aunt takes frequent opportunities of dropping little sentences which I may turn to some advantage. I have long had reason to know that the present state of things would give pleasure to all parties. Your ludicrous account of the scene at the Hermitage was highly diverting, we laughed heartily at it; but I fear it will not produce all that compassion in Miss Fennell's breast which you seem to wish. I will now tell you what I was thinking about and doing at the time you mention. I was then toiling up the hill with Jane and Mrs. Clapham to take our tea at Mr. Tatham's, thinking on the evening when I first took the same walk with you, and on the change which had taken place in my circumstances and views since then—not wholly without a wish that I had your arm to assist me, and your conversation to shorten the walk. Indeed, all our walks have now an insipidity in them which I never thought they would have possessed. When I work, if I wish to get *forward* I may be glad that you are at a distance. Jane begs me to assure you of her kind regards. Mr. Morgan is expected to be here this evening. I must assume a bold and steady countenance to meet his attacks!

I have now written a pretty long letter without reserve or caution, and if all the sentiments of my heart are not laid open to you believe me it is not because I wish them to be concealed, for, I hope there is nothing there that would give you pain or displeasure. My most sincere and earnest wishes are for your happiness and welfare, for this includes my own. Pray much for me that I may be made a blessing and not a hindrance to you. Let me not interrupt your studies nor intrude on that time which ought to be dedicated to better purposes. Forgive my freedom, my dearest friend, and rest assured that you are and ever will be dear to MARIA BRANWELL.

Write very soon.

TO REV. PATRICK BRONTË, A.B., HARTSHEAD

WOOD HOUSE GROVE, *September 11th*, 1812.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,—Having spent the day yesterday at Miry Shay,[1] a place near Bradford, I had not got your letter till

[1] This fine old Jacobean building still stands, and is situated in Barkerend Road, about a quarter of a mile from the parish church.

my return in the evening, and consequently have only a short time this morning to write if I send it by this post. You surely do not think you *trouble* me by writing? No, I think I may venture to say if such were your opinion you would *trouble* me no more. Be assured, your letters are and I hope always will be received with extreme pleasure and read with delight. May our Gracious Father mercifully grant the fulfilment of your prayers! Whilst we depend entirely on Him for happiness, and receive each other and all our blessings as from His hands, what can harm us or make us miserable? Nothing temporal or spiritual.

Jane had a note from Mr. Morgan last evening, and she desires me to tell you that the Methodists' service in church hours is to commence next Sunday week. You may expect frowns and hard words from her when you make your appearance here again, for, if you recollect, she gave you a note to carry to the Doctor, and he has never received it. What have you done with it? If you can give a good account of it you may come to see us as soon as you please and be sure of a hearty welcome from all parties. Next Wednesday we have some thoughts, if the weather be fine, of going to Kirkstall Abbey once more, and I suppose your presence will not make the walk less agreeable to any of us.

The old man is come and waits for my letter. In expectation of seeing you on Monday or Tuesday next,—I remain, yours faithfully and affectionately, M. B.

TO REV. PATRICK BRONTË, A.B., HARTSHEAD

WOOD HOUSE GROVE, *September* 18*th*, 1812.

How readily do I comply with my dear Mr. B.'s request! You see, you have only to express your wishes, and as far as my power extends I hesitate not to fulfil them. My heart tells me that it will always be my pride and pleasure to contribute to your happiness, nor do I fear that this will ever be inconsistent with my duty as a Christian. My esteem for you and my confidence in you is so great, that I firmly believe you will never exact anything from me which I could not conscientiously perform. I shall in future look to you for assistance and instruction whenever I may need them, and hope you will never withhold from me any advice or caution you may see necessary.

For some years I have been perfectly my own mistress, subject

to no *control* whatever—so far from it, that my sisters who are many years older than myself, and even my dear mother, used to consult me in every case of importance, and scarcely ever doubted the propriety of my opinions and actions. Perhaps you will be ready to accuse me of vanity in mentioning this, but you must consider that I do not *boast* of it, I have many times felt it a disadvantage; and although, I thank God, it never led me into error, yet, in circumstances of perplexity and doubt, I have deeply felt the want of a guide and instructor.

At such times I have seen and felt the necessity of supernatural aid, and by fervent applications to a throne of grace I have experienced that my heavenly Father is able and willing to supply the place of every earthly friend. I shall now no longer feel this want, this sense of helpless weakness, for I believe a kind Providence has intended that I shall find in you every earthly friend united; nor do I fear to trust myself under your protection, or shrink from your control. It is pleasant to be subject to those we love, especially when they never exert their authority but for the good of the subject. How few would write in this way! But I do not fear that *you* will make a bad use of it. You tell me to write my thoughts, and thus as they occur I freely let my pen run away with them.

Sat. morn.—I do not know whether you dare show your face here again or not after the blunder you have committed. When we got to the house on Thursday evening, even before we were within the doors, we found that Mr. and Mrs. Bedford had been there, and that they had requested you to mention their intention of coming—a single hint of which you never gave! Poor I too came in for a share in the hard words which were bestowed upon you, for they all agreed that I was the cause of it. Mr. Fennell said you were certainly *mazed*, and talked of sending you to York, etc. And even I begin to think that *this*, together with the *note*, bears some marks of *insanity*! However, I shall suspend my judgment until I hear what excuse you can make for yourself. I suppose you will be quite ready to make one of some kind or another.

Yesterday I performed a difficult and yet a pleasing task in writing to my sisters. I thought I never should accomplish the end for which the letter was designed; but after a good deal of perambulation I gave them to understand the nature of my engagement with you, with the motives and inducements which led me to form such an engagement, and that in consequence of it I should not see them again so soon as I had intended. I con-

cluded by expressing a hope that they would not be less pleased with the information than were my friends here. I think they will not suspect me to have made a wrong step, their partiality for me is so great. And their affection for me will lead them to rejoice in my welfare, even though it should diminish somewhat of their own. I shall think the time tedious till I hear from you, and must beg you will write as soon as possible. Pardon me, my dear friend, if I again caution you against giving way to a weakness of which I have heard you complain. When you find your heart oppressed and your thoughts too much engrossed by one subject let prayer be your refuge—this you no doubt know by experience to be a sure remedy, and a relief from every care and error. Oh, that we had more of the spirit of prayer! I feel that I need it much.

Breakfast-time is near, I must bid you farewell for the time, but rest assured you will always share in the prayers and heart of your own MARIA.

Mr. Fennell has crossed my letter to my sisters. With his usual goodness he has supplied my *deficiencies*, and spoken of me in terms of commendation of which I wish I were more worthy. Your character he has likewise displayed in the most favourable light; and I am sure they will not fail to love and esteem you though unknown.

All here unite in kind regards. Adieu.

TO REV. PATRICK BRONTË, A.B., HARTSHEAD

WOOD HOUSE GROVE, *September 23rd*, 1812.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,—Accept of my warmest thanks for your kind affectionate letter, in which you have rated mine so highly that I really blush to read my own praises. Pray that God would enable me to deserve all the kindness you manifest towards me, and to act consistently with the good opinion you entertain of me —then I shall indeed be a helpmeet for you, and to be this shall at all times be the care and study of my future life. We have had to-day a large party of the Bradford folks—the Rands, Fawcetts, Dobsons, etc. My thoughts often strayed from the company, and I would have gladly left them to follow my present employment. To write to and receive letters from my friends were always among my chief enjoyments, but none ever gave me so

much pleasure as those which I receive from and write to my newly adopted friend. I am by no means sorry you have given up all thought of the house you mentioned. With my cousin's help I have made known your plans to my uncle and aunt. Mr. Fennell immediately coincided with that which respects your present abode, and observed that it had occurred to him before, but that he had not had an opportunity of mentioning it to you. My aunt did not fall in with it so readily, but her objections did not appear to me to be very weighty. For my own part, I feel all the force of your arguments in favour of it, and the objections are so trifling that they can scarcely be called objections. My cousin is of the same opinion. Indeed, you have such a method of considering and digesting a plan before you make it known to your friends, that you run very little risk of incurring their disapprobations, or of having your schemes frustrated. I greatly admire your talents this way—may they never be perverted by being used in a bad cause! And whilst they are exerted for good purposes, may they prove irresistible! If I may judge from your letter, this middle scheme is what would please you best, so that if there should arise no new objection to it, perhaps it will prove the best you can adopt. However, there is yet sufficient time to consider it further. I trust in this and every other circumstance you will be guided by the wisdom that cometh from above —a portion of which I doubt not has guided you hitherto. A belief of this, added to the complete satisfaction with which I read your reasonings on the subject, made me a ready convert to your opinions. I hope nothing will occur to induce you to change your intention of spending the next week at Bradford. Depend on it you shall have letter for letter; but may we not hope to see you here during that time, surely you will not think the way more tedious than usual? I have not heard any particulars respecting the church since you were at Bradford. Mr. Rawson is now there, but Mr. Hardy and his brother are absent, and I understand nothing decisive can be accomplished without them. Jane expects to hear something more to-morrow. Perhaps ere this reaches you, you will have received some intelligence respecting it from Mr. Morgan. If you have no other apology to make for your blunders than that which you have given me, you must not expect to be excused, for I have not mentioned it to any one, so that however it may clear your character in my opinion it is not likely to influence any other person. Little, very little, will induce me to

cover your faults with a veil of charity. I already feel a kind of participation in all that concerns you. All praises and censures bestowed on you must equally affect me. Your joys and sorrows must be mine. Thus shall the one be increased and the other diminished. While this is the case we shall, I hope, always find 'life's cares' to be 'comforts.' And may we feel every trial and distress, for such must be our lot at times, bind us nearer to God and to each other! My heart earnestly joins in your comprehensive prayers. I trust they will unitedly ascend to a throne of grace, and through the Redeemer's merits procure for us peace and happiness here and a life of eternal felicity hereafter. Oh, what sacred pleasure there is in the idea of spending an eternity together in perfect and uninterrupted bliss! This should encourage us to the utmost exertion and fortitude. But whilst I write, my own words condemn me—I am ashamed of my own indolence and backwardness to duty. May I be more careful, watchful, and active than I have ever yet been!

My uncle, aunt, and Jane request me to send their kind regards, and they will be happy to see you any time next week whenever you can conveniently come down from Bradford. Let me hear from you soon—I shall expect a letter on Monday. Farewell, my dearest friend. That you may be happy in yourself and very useful to all around you is the daily earnest prayer of yours truly,

MARIA BRANWELL.

TO REV. PATRICK BRONTË, A.B., HARTSHEAD

WOOD HOUSE GROVE, *October 3rd*, 1812.

How could my dear friend so cruelly disappoint me? Had he known how much I had set my heart on having a letter this afternoon, and how greatly I felt the disappointment when the bag arrived and I found there was nothing for me, I am sure he would not have permitted a little matter to hinder him. But whatever was the reason of your not writing, I cannot believe it to have been neglect or unkindness, therefore I do not in the least blame you, I only beg that in future you will judge of my feelings by your own, and if possible never let me expect a letter without receiving one. You know in my last which I sent you at Bradford I said it would not be in my power to write the next day, but begged I might be favoured with hearing from you on

Saturday, and you will not wonder that I hoped you would have complied with this request. It has just occurred to my mind that it is possible this note was not received; if so, you have felt disappointed likewise; but I think this is not very probable, as the old man is particularly careful, and I never heard of his losing anything committed to his care. The note which I allude to was written on Thursday morning, and you should have received it before you left Bradford. I forget what its contents were, but I know it was written in haste and concluded abruptly. Mr. Fennell talks of visiting Mr. Morgan to-morrow. I cannot lose the opportunity of sending this to the office by him as you will then have it a day sooner, and if you have been daily expecting to hear from me, twenty-four hours are of some importance. I really am concerned to find that this, what many would deem trifling incident, has so much disturbed my mind. I fear I should not have slept in peace to-night if I had been deprived of this opportunity of relieving my mind by scribbling to you, and now I lament that you cannot possibly receive this till Monday. May I hope that there is now some intelligence on the way to me? or must my patience be tried till I see you on Wednesday? But what nonsense am I writing! Surely after this you can have no doubt that you possess all my heart. Two months ago I could not possibly have believed that you would ever engross so much of my thoughts and affections, and far less could I have thought that I should be so forward as to tell you so. I believe I must forbid you to come here again unless you can assure me that you will not steal any more of my regard. Enough of this; I must bring my pen to order, for if I were to suffer myself to revise what I have written I should be tempted to throw it in the fire, but I have determined that you shall see my whole heart. I have not yet informed you that I received your serio-comic note on Thursday afternoon, for which accept my thanks.

My cousin desires me to say that she expects a long poem on her birthday, when she attains the important age of twenty-one. Mr. Fennell joins with us in requesting that you will not fail to be here on Wednesday, as it is decided that on Thursday we are to go to the Abbey if the weather, etc., permits.

Sunday morning.—I am not sure if I do right in adding a few lines to-day, but knowing that it will give you pleasure I wish to finish, that you may have it to-morrow. I will just say that if my feeble prayers can aught avail, you will find your labours this day

both pleasant and profitable, as they concern your own soul and the souls of those to whom you preach. I trust in your hours of retirement you will not forget to pray for me. I assure you I need every assistance to help me forward ; I feel that my heart is more ready to attach itself to earth than heaven. I sometimes think there never was a mind so dull and inactive as mine is with regard to spiritual things.

I must not forget to thank you for the pamphlets and tracts which you sent us from Bradford. I hope we shall make good use of them. I must now take my leave. I believe I need scarcely assure you that I am yours truly and very affectionately,

MARIA BRANWELL.

TO REV. PATRICK BRONTË, A.B., HARTSHEAD

WOOD HOUSE GROVE, *October 21st*, 1812.

With the sincerest pleasure do I retire from company to converse with him whom I love beyond all others. Could my beloved friend see my heart he would then be convinced that the affection I bear him is not at all inferior to that which he feels for me—indeed I sometimes think that in truth and constancy it excels. But do not think from this that I entertain any suspicions of your sincerity—no, I firmly believe you to be sincere and generous, and doubt not in the least that you feel all you express. In return, I entreat that you will do me the justice to believe that you have not only a *very large portion* of my *affection* and *esteem*, but *all* that I am capable of feeling, and from henceforth measure my feelings by your own. Unless my love for you were very great how could I so contentedly give up my home and all my friends—a home I loved so much that I have often thought nothing could bribe me to renounce it for any great length of time together, and friends with whom I have been so long accustomed to share all the vicissitudes of joy and sorrow? Yet these have lost their weight, and though I cannot always think of them without a sigh, yet the anticipation of sharing with you all the pleasures and pains, the cares and anxieties of life, of contributing to your comfort and becoming the companion of your pilgrimage, is more delightful to me than any other prospect which this world can possibly present. I expected to have heard from you on Saturday last, and can scarcely refrain from thinking you unkind

to keep me in suspense two whole days longer than was necessary, but it is well that my patience should be sometimes tried, or I might entirely lose it, and this would be a loss indeed! Lately I have experienced a considerable increase of hopes and fears, which tend to destroy the calm uniformity of my life. These are not unwelcome, as they enable me to discover more of the evils and errors of my heart, and discovering them I hope through grace to be enabled to correct and amend them. I am sorry to say that my cousin has had a very serious cold, but to-day I think she is better; her cough seems less, and I hope we shall be able to come to Bradford on Saturday afternoon, where we intend to stop till Tuesday. You may be sure we shall not soon think of taking such another journey as the last. I look forward with pleasure to Monday, when I hope to meet with you, for as we are no *longer twain* separation is painful, and to meet must ever be attended with joy.

Thursday morning.—I intended to have finished this before breakfast, but unfortunately slept an hour too long. I am every moment in expectation of the old man's arrival. I hope my cousin is still better to-day; she requests me to say that she is much obliged to you for your kind inquiries and the concern you express for her recovery. I take all possible care of her, but yesterday she was naughty enough to venture into the yard without her bonnet! As you do not say anything of going to Leeds I conclude you have not been. We shall most probably hear from the Dr. this afternoon. I am much pleased to hear of his success at Bierley! O that you may both be zealous and successful in your efforts for the salvation of souls, and may your own lives be holy, and your hearts greatly blessed while you are engaged in administering to the good of others! I should have been very glad to have had it in my power to lessen your fatigue and cheer your spirits by my exertions on Monday last. I will hope that this pleasure is still reserved for me. In general, I feel a calm confidence in the providential care and continued mercy of God, and when I consider His past deliverances and past favours I am led to wonder and adore. A sense of my small returns of love and gratitude to Him often abases me and makes me think I am little better than those who profess no religion. Pray for me, my dear friend, and rest assured that you possess a very, very large portion of the prayers, thoughts, and heart of yours truly,

M. BRANWELL.

Mr. Fennell requests Mr. Bedford to call on the man who has had orders to make blankets for the Grove and desire him to send them as soon as possible. Mr. Fennell will be greatly obliged to Mr. Bedford if he will take this trouble.

TO REV. PATRICK BRONTË, A.B., HARTSHEAD

WOOD HOUSE GROVE, *November 18th*, 1812.

MY DEAR SAUCY PAT,—Now don't you think you deserve this epithet far more than I do that which you have given me? I really know not what to make of the beginning of your last; the winds, waves, and rocks almost stunned me. I thought you were giving me the account of some terrible dream, or that you had had a presentiment of the fate of my poor box, having no idea that your lively imagination could make so much of the slight reproof conveyed in my last. What will you say when you get a *real, downright scolding*? Since you show such a readiness to atone for your offences after receiving a mild rebuke, I am inclined to hope you will seldom deserve a severe one. I accept with pleasure your atonement, and send you a free and full forgiveness. But I cannot allow that your affection is more deeply rooted than mine. However, we will dispute no more about this, but rather embrace every opportunity to prove its sincerity and strength by acting in every respect as friends and fellow-pilgrims travelling the same road, actuated by the same motives, and having in view the same end. I think if our lives are spared twenty years hence I shall then pray for you with the same, if not greater, fervour and delight that I do now. I am pleased that you are so fully convinced of my candour, for to know that you suspected me of a deficiency in this virtue would grieve and mortify me beyond expression. I do not derive any merit from the possession of it, for in me it is constitutional. Yet I think where it is possessed it will rarely exist alone, and where it is wanted there is reason to doubt the existence of almost every other virtue. As to the other qualities which your partiality attributes to me, although I rejoice to know that I stand so high in your good opinion, yet I blush to think in how small a degree I possess them. But it shall be the pleasing study of my future life to gain such an increase of grace and wisdom as shall enable me to act up to your highest expectations and prove to you a helpmeet. I firmly believe the Almighty has set us

apart for each other; may we, by earnest, frequent prayer, and every possible exertion, endeavour to fulfil His will in all things! I do not, cannot, doubt your love, and here I freely declare I love you above all the world besides. I feel very, very grateful to the great Author of all our mercies for His unspeakable love and condescension towards us, and desire 'to show forth my gratitude not only with my lips, but by my life and conversation.' I indulge a hope that our mutual prayers will be answered, and that our intimacy will tend much to promote our temporal and eternal interest.

I suppose you never expected to be much the richer for me, but I am sorry to inform you that I am still poorer than I thought myself. I mentioned having sent for my books, clothes, etc. On Saturday evening about the time you were writing the description of your imaginary shipwreck, I was reading and feeling the effects of a real one, having then received a letter from my sister giving me an account of the vessel in which she had sent my box being stranded on the coast of Devonshire, in consequence of which the box was dashed to pieces with the violence of the sea, and all my little property, with the exception of a very few articles, swallowed up in the mighty deep. If this should not prove the prelude to something worse, I shall think little of it, as it is the first disastrous circumstance which has occurred since I left my home, and having been so highly favoured it would be highly ungrateful in me were I to suffer this to dwell much on my mind.

Mr. Morgan was here yesterday, indeed he only left this morning. He mentioned having written to invite you to Bierley on Sunday next, and if you complied with his request it is likely that we shall see you both here on Sunday evening. As we intend going to Leeds next week, we should be happy if you would accompany us on Monday or Tuesday. I mention this by desire of Miss Fennell, who begs to be remembered affectionately to you. Notwithstanding Mr. Fennell's complaints and threats, I doubt not but he will give you a cordial reception whenever you think fit to make your appearance at the Grove. Which you may likewise be assured of receiving from your ever truly affectionate

MARIA.

Both the doctor and his lady very much wish to know what kind of address we make use of in our letters to each other. I think they would scarcely hit on *this*!!

TO REV. PATRICK BRONTË, A.B., HARTSHEAD

WOOD HOUSE GROVE, *December 5th*, 1812.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,—So you *thought* that *perhaps* I *might* expect to hear from you. As the case was so doubtful, and you were in such great haste, you might as well have deferred writing a few days longer, for you seem to suppose it is a matter of perfect indifference to me whether I hear from you or not. I believe I once requested you to judge of my feelings by your own —am I to think that *you* are thus indifferent? I feel very unwilling to entertain such an opinion, and am grieved that you should suspect me of such a cold, heartless, attachment. But I am too serious on the subject; I only meant to rally you a little on the beginning of your last, and to tell you that I fancied there was a coolness in it which none of your former letters had contained. If this fancy was groundless, forgive me for having indulged it, and let it serve to convince you of the sincerity and warmth of my affection. Real love is ever apt to suspect that it meets not with an equal return; you must not wonder then that my fears are sometimes excited. My pride cannot bear the idea of a diminution of your attachment, or to think that it is stronger on my side than on yours. But I must not permit my pen so fully to disclose the feelings of my heart, nor will I tell you whether I am pleased or not at the thought of seeing you on the appointed day.

Miss Fennell desires her kind regards, and, with her father, is extremely obliged to you for the trouble you have taken about the carpet, and has no doubt but it will give full satisfaction. They think there will be no occasion for the green cloth.

We intend to set about making the cakes here next week, but as the fifteen or twenty persons whom you mention live probably somewhere in your neighbourhood, I think it will be most convenient for Mrs. B. to make a small one for the purpose of distributing there, which will save us the difficulty of sending so far.

You may depend on my learning my lessons as rapidly as they are given me. I am already tolerably perfect in the A B C, etc. I am much obliged to you for the pretty little hymn which I have already got by heart, but cannot promise to sing it scientifically, though I will endeavour to gain a little more assurance.

Since I began this Jane put into my hands Lord Lyttelton's

Advice to a Lady. When I read those lines, 'Be never cool reserve with passion joined, with caution choose, but then be fondly kind, etc.,' my heart smote me for having in some cases used too much reserve towards you. Do you think you have any cause to complain of me? If you do, let me know it. For were it in my power to prevent it, I would in no instance occasion you the least pain or uneasiness. I am certain no one ever loved you with an affection more pure, constant, tender, and ardent than that which I feel. Surely this is not saying too much; it is the truth, and I trust you are worthy to know it. I long to improve in every religious and moral quality, that I may be a help, and if possible an ornament to you. Oh let us pray much for wisdom and grace to fill our appointed stations with propriety, that we may enjoy satisfaction in our own souls, edify others, and bring glory to the name of Him who has so wonderfully preserved, blessed, and brought us together.

If there is anything in the commencement of this which looks like pettishness, forgive it; my mind is now completely divested of every feeling of the kind, although I own I am sometimes too apt to be overcome by this disposition.

Let me have the pleasure of hearing from you again as soon as convenient. This writing is uncommonly bad, but I too am in haste.

Adieu, my dearest.—I am your affectionate and sincere

MARIA.

The marriage in Guiseley Church, near Bradford,[1] was followed by the setting up house at Hartshead, where Mr. Brontë was curate for four years. Mr. William Morgan, who married Mrs. Brontë's cousin the same day, was curate of the neighbouring village of Bierley. Mr. Morgan performed the marriage ceremony, and Mr. Brontë officiated a few minutes later to make his wife's cousin Mrs. Morgan. During his married life at Hartshead, Mr. Brontë lived in a house at the top of Clough Lane,

[1] Thus reported in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1813:—'Lately at Guiseley, near Bradford, by the Revd. W. Morgan, minister of Bierley, Revd. P. Brontë, B.A., minister of Hartshead-cum-Clifton, to Maria, third daughter of the late T. Branwell, Esq., of Penzance. At the same time, by the Revd. P. Brontë, Revd. W. Morgan, to the only daughter of Mr. John Fennell, Head-master of the Wesleyan Academy, near Bradford.'

Hightown. Here his two eldest children, Maria and Elizabeth, were born.[1] He then removed to Thornton, near Bradford.

[1] Maria Brontë was born in 1813, and christened April 23, 1814. Elizabeth was born Feb. 8, 1815, and was christened at Thornton on August 26 of that year, her aunt Elizabeth Branwell of Penzance, and Elizabeth Firth of Thornton, being her godmothers, and Mr. Firth of Kipping House, Thornton, her godfather.

CHAPTER II

THE BRONTËS AT THORNTON

PATRICK BRONTË exchanged the living of Hartshead-cum-Clifton in 1815 for that of Thornton. He was doubtless inspired thereto by the fact that his wife's cousin, Mrs. William Morgan, and her husband were residing in Bradford, about four miles distant. It is clear that both Mr. Brontë's entry into Yorkshire and his introduction to the lady who became his wife were due to Mr. Morgan. The friends, as we have seen, first met at Wellington. Through the influence of Mrs. Fletcher of Madeley in the same county, Mr. Morgan came into communication with the Fennells and their friend, Mr. Crosse, Vicar of Bradford. Mr. John Fennell was a godson of the famous Wesleyan, the Rev. John Fletcher, Wesley's friend. Mr. Morgan, once a curate at Bradford, it was natural that he should help his new friend to a vacant curacy at Dewsbury; it was natural further that he should introduce him to the Fennells, and hence the marriage came about. Mr. Morgan was curate under the Rev. John Crosse, and later, in 1813, became Vicar of Christ Church, Bradford,[1]

[1] Mr. Morgan became a widower and married a second time in 1836, and a third time in very old age. His second wife was Miss Mary Alice Gibson of Bradford. In 1851 he exchanged livings with the Rector of Hulcott, Bucks. He died there in 1858, aged eighty-eight years. His works included an account of Mr. Crosse, his predecessor at Bradford; *The Parish Priest Pourtrayed*; *Christian Instructions*, consisting of Sermons and Addresses; a tale entitled *The Welsh Weaver*; a *Selection of Psalms and Hymns*; also a Memoir of his second wife entitled, *Simplicity and Godly Sincerity exemplified in the Life and Death of Mrs. Morgan of Hulcott, Buckinghamshire, and*

supplementing his income for a time, it would seem, by keeping a school. The then minister[1] at Thornton was the Rev. Thomas Atkinson. Mr. Atkinson was betrothed to a Miss Walker of Lascelles Hall, near Huddersfield, and to be near to this lady, it is said that the young curate desired to exchange with Mr. Brontë. Mr. Atkinson remained in possession of the perpetual curacy of Hartshead until 1866, and he lived there until 1870. He was the godfather of Charlotte Brontë,[2] and his wife was her godmother.[3] The Atkinsons were not, of course, contented with Mr. Brontë's modest residence. They resided at

late of Bradford, Yorkshire. The second Mrs. Morgan died in 1852. Mr. Morgan also edited a magazine, *The Pastoral Visitor*, to which Mr. Brontë several times contributed.

[1] It was a perpetual curacy, serving as did also Haworth as a chapel-of-ease to Bradford Parish Church. The curate was designed 'minister' until 1855, when the Rev. R. H. Heap became Vicar of Thornton. The value of the livings of Hartshead and Thornton was the same—£320 per annum.

[2] A great-niece, Miss Lucy Ethel Fraser, sends me from the Atkinson Pedigree in her possession the following information concerning Mr. Atkinson and his wife. It will be seen that Mr. Atkinson's mother was a Firth, a family with which we are to become acquainted a little later :—

Thomas Atkinson born at Leeds, June 10th, 1780, B.A. of Magdalene College, Cambridge, and 7th Junior Optime 1802. Married at Kirkheaton, December 23rd, 1817. M.A. 1814. Incumbent of Hartshead-cum-Clifton, Yorkshire.	=	Frances, 3rd d. of Samuel Walker, Esq., of Lascelles Hall, nr. Huddersfield, by Esther his wife, d. of John Firth, of Kipping, Gent. Born at Kirkheaton, January 28th, 1793.

Mr. Atkinson died February 28, 1870, at the Green House, Mirfield ; his wife died in 1881. Miss Fraser further informs me that her mother was at school at Roe Head when Charlotte Brontë was a teacher there, and that she 'was a pet of Charlotte's, who used to call her "velvet cheeks."'

[3] There is a tradition among the descendants of the Rev. James Clarke Franks, Vicar of Huddersfield, who married Miss Elizabeth Firth, that the pair were Charlotte Brontë's godfather and godmother. It is possible, although there is no direct evidence, that Miss Firth may have been the second godmother with Mrs. Atkinson. She was not married until 1824.

Green House, Mirfield, and there Charlotte Brontë frequently visited as a girl.[1]

The historian of Thornton[2] has clearly presented that town to us as it was when Mr. Brontë with his wife and two children arrived on the scene. His ministrations were conducted in a building that was known as the Old Bell Chapel, which dated from 1612, a building of unredeemed ugliness. There were only twenty-three houses in the main street of Thornton at that date. The Parsonage, as it appears to have been called, was in Market Street. Many would think it a very mean cottage. But Thornton as it may be seen a century later is a much sadder sight, considered æsthetically, than it was when it presented itself to the eyes of Mr. Brontë. It is now a town with workshops, factories, and stone quarries ; the old chapel has been superseded by a new, but by no means beautiful, church, which stands exactly opposite the ruins, divided only by the road. It is some years since I was there. First I wandered among the chapel ruins and the gravestones which lie around. I found the font, in which the young Brontës were baptized, exposed to wind and weather, apparently cared for by none. It has since been removed into the new church opposite.[3] This church also possesses to-day a Brontë organ, built by subscriptions from enthusiasts. A still more precious possession is the register of births, where are recorded the baptisms of all but one of the Brontë children. It will be remembered

[1] Mr. W. W. Yates in *The Father of the Brontës*.

[2] Mr. William Scruton, to whose book *Thornton and the Brontës* I am indebted for many facts in this chapter. It was published in 1898 by John Dale and Co., Ltd., of Bridge Street, Bradford.

[3] There are now three fonts in the new church at Thornton—a new one and two old ones. The oldest, dating from the seventeenth century, was discovered among the ruins of the Bell Chapel by Mr. Charles Forshaw, and at his suggestion removed into the church. This was the font in use at the time when Mr. Brontë was curate at Thornton. The other font was transferred from the ruins to the church at the suggestion of Mr. W. Brookes. Mr. John J. Stead of Heckmondwike photographed both the old fonts when they were among the ruins.

that Maria Brontë, the eldest child, was baptized at Hartshead, where she was born. Elizabeth, the second child, although born at Hartshead, was baptized at Thornton.[1]

It was essentially a nonconformist village, with many Puritan traditions, in which Mr. Brontë came to take up his duties in that historic year 1815. Kipping Chapel at Thornton, the place of worship belonging to the Independents, had a history more remarkable than any that pertained to the Established Church so far as that locality was concerned. Oliver Heywood, that famous Royalist and Presbyterian, who suffered for his devotion to royalty under Cromwell and for his Presbyterianism under Charles II., visited Thornton many times. It was the scene of the ministration of two famous men, Joseph and Accepted Lester, the latter occupying the pulpit of Kipping House from 1702 to 1709. In 1760 a brother of Dr. Priestley was minister. A certain Robinson Pool was pastor during Mr. Brontë's residence at Thornton, and with him the father of certain remarkable children, who alone interest us much, managed to agree very well.

At Thornton, then, Charlotte Brontë was born on the 21st of April 1816, Branwell in 1817, Emily in 1818,

[1] I am indebted to Mr. J. J. Stead of Heckmondwike for the following notes:—

FROM THE REGISTER OF BAPTISMS, HARTSHEAD-CUM-CLIFTON, YORKSHIRE.

1814 April 23	Maria	daughter of	Revd. Patrick Brontë Minister of this Church, and Maria, his wife.	William Morgan officiating Minister.

FROM THE REGISTER OF BAPTISMS AT THORNTON CHURCH.

1815 Augt. 26	Elizabeth daughter of	Patrick and Maria	Brontë	Thornton	J. Fennell officiating Minister.

and Anne in 1820.[1] In this last year the family removed to Haworth, and in 1821 the poor mother was dead. The life of the Brontës at Thornton would be an entire blank to us were it not for a slight glimpse of them afforded by the diary of his grandmother, which Professor Moore Smith of Sheffield has kindly permitted me to publish. This lady was Miss Elizabeth Firth, whose father resided at Kipping House, Thornton, and was very kind to Mr. Brontë, and stood godfather to some of his children. Miss Firth kept a diary, unhappily all too brief, and only the Brontë enthusiast will forgive its inclusion in this volume, so meagre are its details.[2] But from this document we learn that Mr. Brontë was not, at least in the early years of his married life, an unsocial person. At Haworth he gained that character among the village gossips. But, apart from the fact that he did not enjoy

[1] Baptisms solemnised in the Parish of Bradford and Chapelry of Thornton in the County of York.

When Baptized.	Child's Christian Name.	Parent's Name.		Abode.	Quality, Trade, or Profession.	By whom the Ceremony was Performed.
		Christian.	Surname.			
1816 29th June	Charlotte daughter of	The Rev. Patrick and Maria	Brontë	Thornton	Minister of Thornton	Wm. Morgan Minister of Christ Church Bradford.
1817 July 23	Patrick Branwell son of	Patrick and Maria	Brontë	Thornton	Minister	Jno. Fennell officiating Minister.
1818 20th August	Emily Jane daughter of	The Rev. Patrick and Maria	Brontë A. B.	Thornton Parsonage	Minister of Thornton	Wm. Morgan Minister of Christ Church Bradford.
1820 March 25th	Anne daughter of	The Rev. Patrick and Maria	Brontë	Minister of Haworth		Wm. Morgan Minister of Christ Church in Bradford.

[2] See Appendix II. The Brontës at Thornton.

many months of married life at Haworth, the following letter, which was contributed by Mr. William Dearden of Halifax to the *Examiner* in July 1857, after reading the first edition of Mrs. Gaskell's book, is a sufficient answer to the charge of moroseness and even savageness that has been made against him. The letter has never up to now been reprinted :—

In a recent review in the *Times* of the Life of Charlotte Brontë, prominence was given to that portion of the biographer's narrative which exhibits in an unfavourable light the domestic character of the Rev. P. Brontë, the father of the illustrious Yorkshire-woman. As a matter of justice, which it is hoped you will honourably concede, the friends of Mr. Brontë claim the privilege, through the medium of your columns, of correcting the gross misstatements, unscrupulously made, concerning that gentleman in the memoir of his daughter.

The task of a biographer is sacred and responsible. No one should undertake it who *does* not feel sure that he possesses not only the ability to furnish, but the judgment to select, the best authentic information respecting the personages, living or dead, whom he introduces into his pages. If he lack in these essentials —though his revelations, especially if singular and romantic, may interest a large class of readers—consequences often ensue, mortifying to the unlucky writer, derogatory to the character of the dead, and painfully afflicting to the feelings of the living. *Hinc illæ lacrymæ* in regard to the biographer of Charlotte Brontë.

It will shortly appear that Mrs. Gaskell has relied for most that she has said of Mr. Brontë's conduct towards his family on the partial testimony of a single individual—the '*good old woman*,' who was the only resident in the parsonage, as a temporary nurse, during the illness of Mrs. Brontë.

That some account should have been given, in the Life of Charlotte Brontë, of her father, was naturally to be expected ; but then care should have been taken that the materials for drawing his domestic portraiture should have been selected from undeniably authentic sources ; in other words, that Mr. Brontë should have been allowed to sit for his own picture, and not a *simulacrum* been introduced in his stead, which no more resembles him than 'I to Hercules.' The long-tried and faithful pastor of

a flock by whom he is universally revered—the father of a family, all of whom loved and honoured him, and of whom he is now the sole survivor—ought to have been treated with at least common decency and Christian charity. If it were necessary to introduce in the background a gloomy figure to heighten the effect of the 'Three Brontë Sisters,' surely poor Branwell's spectral shadow might have sufficed for such a purpose, without dragging in the 'child-reft father,' tarred and feathered by the malice of an ignorant country gossip. That Mrs. Gaskell did not give the 'counterfeit presentment' of the Rev. gentleman as the 'coinage of her own brain,' the public will readily believe; but they will not so readily acquit her of having done a great wrong to a venerable old man, 'fourscore and upwards' (whom, before she became his public accuser, 'the breath of calumny had never tainted'), by credulously listening to and recording the malignant misrepresentations of a covert and distant enemy, without appealing to those who had gathered round his hearth for above a quarter of a century, and who, consequently, were best acquainted with the domestic habits and conduct of the master of the house. Martha Brown, the present housekeeper, an intelligent young woman (who has in her possession several interesting letters of Charlotte Brontë's which have never been published), has lived in Mr. Brontë's family from childhood. Nancy Garrs, now in Bradford, was nurse to Mr. Brontë's children during their residence at Thornton; she afterwards removed with the family to Haworth parsonage, and became a domestic servant; there, being joined by her younger sister Sarah, who came to assist her, she remained till very near the time of Mrs. Brontë's death. Sarah continued with Mr. Brontë long after that melancholy event, and is now, I believe, in America. One would have imagined that to two at least of the parties just mentioned—so easily accessible—Mrs. Gaskell would have applied for information respecting the character and conduct of Mr. Brontë, as a husband and a father; but to neither of these, nor to any respectable person in Haworth, acquainted with that gentleman, has she made application for such a purpose. Had she done so, how different would have been the picture she would have drawn! Instead of the cold, stern, stoical, unsympathising being she has depicted him—in certain fits of hallucination, acting the tyrant or the madman—she would have represented him as an affectionate and considerate husband, and a kind and indulgent father.

Mrs. Gaskell acknowledges that 'the good old woman, Mrs. Brontë's nurse, was her informant,' of what she is pleased to term 'the instances of eccentricity' exemplified by the pastor at Haworth—a knowledge of which 'she holds to be necessary for the right understanding of the life of his daughter.' But if these 'instances,' etc., cannot be proved—nay, are absolutely false—as we shall shortly see—they cannot serve the purpose which Mrs. Gaskell 'holds it to be necessary' that they should serve. On the authority of this Abigail, the biographer ends her curious category of the qualities of the two sisters, Nancy and Sarah Garrs, by designating them 'wasteful' servants. 'Wasteful!' said Mr. Brontë to Nancy: 'had you and your sister been wasteful, I should have found it out; but I can truly say that no master was ever blessed with two more careful and honest servants.' We now see on whose testimony the greatest dependence can be placed.

The nurse says: 'I used to think them (the children) spiritless, they were so different to any children I had ever seen. In part I set it down to a fancy Mr. Brontë had of not letting them have flesh meat to eat. It was from no wish for saving, for there was plenty and even *waste* in the house, with young servants, and no mistress to see after them; but he thought the children should be brought up simply and hardily; *so they had nothing but potatoes for their dinner;* but they never seemed to wish for anything else; they were good little children.' By way of corollary to this statement, Mrs. Gaskell adds, 'I imagine Mr. Brontë must have formed some of his opinions on the management of children from these two theorists' (Rousseau and Mr. Day). She gives an example of the evils attending such a mode of treating children, which it is not necessary to repeat. 'Mr. Brontë,' she continues, 'wishes to make his children hardy and indifferent to the pleasures of eating and dress. In the latter he succeeded as far as regarded his daughters; but he went at his object with unsparing earnestness of purpose.' Nancy Garrs asserts that the children had meat at dinner every day in the week, and as much as they could eat; the only article of food from the free use of which they were restricted was butter; but its want was compensated by what is called in Yorkshire, 'spice-cake.'

'Mrs. Brontë's nurse told me,' says Mrs. Gaskell, 'that one day when the children had been out on the moor, and rain had come on, she thought their feet would be wet, and accordingly she

rummaged out some coloured boots which had been given to them by a friend, the Mr. Morgan, who married "cousin Jane," she believes. The little pairs she ranged round the kitchen fire to warm; but when the children came back, the boots were nowhere to be found; only a very strong odour of burnt leather was perceived. Mr. Brontë had come in and seen them; they were too gay and luxurious for his children, and would foster a love of dress; *so he put them in the fire.* He spared nothing that offended his antique simplicity.' It is sufficient to say that there is not an atom of truth in this ridiculous story. I make the assertion on the authority of Mr. Brontë himself, and of Nancy, who declares that such a circumstance as burning the boots could not have happened in the kitchen, from which she was rarely absent above five minutes at a time during the day, without her having a knowledge of it.

'Long before this,' Mrs. Gaskell declares (on the authority, it is presumed, of the aforesaid 'good old woman'), 'some one had given Mrs. Brontë a silk gown; either the make, the colour, or the material, was not according to his (Mr. Brontë's) notions of consistent propriety, and Mrs. Brontë in consequence never wore it. But for all this she kept it treasured up in her drawers, which were generally locked. One day, however, while in the kitchen, she remembered that she had left the key in her drawer, and hearing Mr. Brontë upstairs, she augured some ill to her dress, and running up in haste, *she found it cut to shreds.* The following is the true history of this little affair, as given by Nancy:—'One morning Mr. Brontë perceived that his Mrs. had put on a print gown, which was made in the fashion of that day, with a long waist and what he considered absurd-looking sleeves. In a pleasant humour he bantered her about the dress, and she went upstairs and laid it aside. Some time after, Mr. Brontë entered her room, and cut off the sleeves. In the course of the day, Mrs. Brontë found the sleeveless gown, and showed it me in the kitchen, laughing heartily. Next day, however, he went to Keighley, and bought the material for a silk gown, which was made to suit Mr. Brontë's taste.'

'His strong, passionate, Irish nature,' observes Mrs. Gaskell (endorsing, of course, the opinion of her favourite informant), 'was, in general, compressed down with resolute stoicism; but it was there, notwithstanding all his philosophic calm and dignity of demeanour. He did not speak when he was annoyed or dis-

pleased, but worked off his volcanic wrath *by firing pistols out of the back door in rapid succession.* Mrs. Brontë, lying in bed upstairs, would hear the quick explosions, and know that something had gone wrong; but her sweet nature thought invariably of the bright side, and she would say, "Ought I not to be thankful that he never gave me an angry word?" Now and then his anger took a different form, but still was speechless. *Once he got the hearthrug, and stuffing it up the grate, deliberately set it on fire, remained in the room in spite of the stench, until it had mouldered and shrivelled away into uselessness. Another time he took some chairs, and sawed away at the backs till they were reduced to the condition of stools.*' All this about firing the pistols, burning the hearthrug, and sawing away at the chair-backs, I am assured by Mr. Brontë, and by Nancy too, is a tissue of falsehoods.

'Owing to some illness of the digestive organs,' says Mrs. Gaskell, 'Mr. Brontë was obliged to be very careful about his diet; and, in order to avoid the temptation, and possibly to have the necessary quiet for digestion, he had begun, before his wife's death, to take his dinner alone—a habit which he always retained. He did not require companionship, therefore he did not seek it, either in his walks, or in daily life.' Nancy states that she never heard of Mr. Brontë's being troubled with indigestion, but even if he were, it did not prevent him from dining with his family every day. His children were the frequent companions of his walks. I remember having seen him more than once conversing kindly and affably with them in the studio of a clever artist who resided in Keighley; and many others, both in that town and in Haworth, can bear testimony to the fact of his being often seen accompanied by his young family in his visits to friends, and in his rambles among the hills.

I may remark, in passing, that the sad story of 'a wealthy manufacturer beyond Keighley'—unnecessarily and cruelly introduced—has occasioned *more* pain among his descendants, whom, Mrs. Gaskell says, 'the strong feeling of the country-side still holds as accursed,' a degree of pain which a whole life's penance by the narrator could not remove.

Mrs. Gaskell speaks truly and well of the good terms on which Charlotte Brontë (and she might have added the father and Branwell too) lived with the servants Nancy and Sarah Garrs, 'who cannot,' she says, 'speak of the family without tears.' To show the estimation in which these two sisters were held, I may

remark that Mr. Brontë presented them with ten pounds, when the younger finally quitted his service; and his daughter Charlotte, having heard that the latter, shortly after her arrival at her home in Bradford, had been attacked by a violent fever, went to see her, and in spite of every remonstrance, entered the room of the sick girl, threw herself on the bed beside her, and, with terms of affectionate regard, repeatedly kissed her burning brow. Warmly was this kindly feeling on the part of the Brontë family reciprocated by Nancy and her sister; 'the former of whom,' says Mrs. Gaskell, 'went over from Bradford to Haworth on purpose to see Mr. Brontë, and offer him her true sympathy, when his last child died.' An amusing instance is afforded by Nancy of her appreciation of Mr. Brontë's character as a husband, and of his concern for her welfare. One day he entered the kitchen, apparently in great excitement. 'Nancy,' said he, 'is it true what I have heard that you are going to marry a Pat?' 'Yes, sir, I believe it is,' was her prompt reply; 'and if he prove but a tenth part as kind a husband to me as you have been to Mrs. Brontë, I shall think myself very happy in having made a Pat my choice.'

Whether another edition of Mrs. Gaskell's book will see the light or not, it is the duty of Mr. Brontë's friends to see to it that they do not suffer his grey hairs to go down to the grave with the injurious aspersions on his character, contained in it, unremoved. 'I did not know,' said the venerable old man, a few weeks ago, 'that I had an enemy in the world; much less one who would traduce me before my death. Everything in that book (meaning the biography of his daughter) which relates to my conduct to my family is either false or distorted. I never committed such acts as are there ascribed to me. I stated this in a letter which I sent to Mrs. Gaskell, requesting her at the same time to cancel the false statements about me in the next edition of her book. To this I received no other answer than that Mrs. Gaskell was unwell and not able to write.'

I have not the remotest wish to injure Mrs. Gaskell in the estimation of the public by exposing these 'false statements' which she has made concerning Mr. Brontë in her biography of his daughter; but she has done great injustice to a good and amiable man, and it is but right that both she and the world should see that she has done so. She ought not, for the sake of establishing a theory to account for certain peculiarities in Charlotte Brontë's

character, to have limited her inquiries to one particular party—and that party, as has been shown, not the most impartial and trustworthy. Character, she has found by humiliating experience, is too sacred a thing to be trifled with—even though the truth be spoken of the living and the dead. The terror of the law, like the ancient rack, may extort recantations of former avowed facts and opinions; but the public cannot respect the pusillanimity that repudiates what an erring judgment revealed to the world. A Branwell's story told with such evident gusto, vanishes into the limbo of fiction, when the Medusa of Law shakes her snaky locks at the trembling narrator—it is a *myth* imposed upon the credulity of one who wished to make a book; and the writer is deeply sorry that she has given it publicity. It is to be hoped poor Branwell will meet with a more discreet and Spartan biographer than he has found in Mrs. Gaskell. No legal threat from the man of peace, whom she, no doubt, unintentionally wronged, will ever subject her to the painful necessity of making humiliating confessions of her culpable credulity. He has justified himself; and he leaves it to the writer of the *Life of Charlotte Brontë* to speak of him, in future, with candour and truth.

Neither from the biography of Mrs. Gaskell nor from any of the numerous books upon the subject of the Brontës do we really learn anything of the life of the family at Thornton, although that village is rendered so famous by the birth of the Brontë children there. One is the more grateful, therefore, for the meagre diary of Elizabeth Firth, with its records of constant visits, tea-drinkings, and social intercourse. Mr. Brontë appears in it in a quite pleasant light, and we may be quite sure that he was, on the whole, a gentle, considerate husband. Miss Firth was but eighteen years of age when Mr. Brontë removed to Thornton in 1815. She had, it is interesting to note, been a pupil of Miss Richmal Mangnall, the author of the once famous *Mangnall's Questions*, who for many years kept a school at Wakefield. From her we learn much that we do not obtain elsewhere, as for example the interesting fact that when Charlotte was born—the future author of *Jane Eyre* was named after an aunt in Cornwall

—Mrs. Brontë had her sister Elizabeth staying with her, that sister who was to become a second mother to Charlotte in the coming years. Charlotte was nearly four years of age when her father exchanged the living of Thornton for that of Haworth, six miles away. He had been five years at Thornton. Haworth offered him many attractions—a healthier environment for his delicate wife, a better and more commodious house for his six little children; no increase of income, it is true, but no material loss and no great separation for so good a walker from his great friends, the Firths of Thornton. Mr. Brontë, it is clear, took the service at Haworth from February 1820, although he did not remove his family to the Haworth parsonage until April of that year. 'There are those yet alive,' wrote Mrs. Gaskell in 1857, 'who remember seven heavily laden carts lumbering slowly up the long stone street' of Haworth 'bearing the new parson's household goods to his future abode.'

CHAPTER III

INFANCY AT HAWORTH AND COWAN BRIDGE

HAWORTH, we have been told, has been over-described. Yet nothing could be more pardonable than the attempt to present in word-painting this not particularly picturesque mill-town of the north.[1] The visitor who drives over from Ilkley has glimpses of the glorious moors which must alone have served to give moments of buoyancy and exhilaration to the children who lived the story we have to tell. Approached from Keighley, the little town seems but a dreary, monotonous climb for the pedestrian, unless he recalls the fact that these Brontë children toiled often on foot the self-same journey, bringing back books from the library of the old Mechanics' Institute, and thereby supplementing the scantily furnished book-shelves of their own home. Arriving in the little town, one is still arrested by the sign of the 'Bull,' an inn that appears more than once in the Brontë story. One observes the church—not the building in which Mr. Brontë officiated—and close by, separated by a graveyard, the house in which our story was in the main lived. The original church, built by William Grimshaw[2] in 1755, was destroyed in 1879, and

[1] Pigot's Yorkshire Directory of 1828 gives the census during the first year of Mr. Brontë's incumbency thus:—

'HAWORTH, a populous manufacturing village, in the honour of Pontefract, Morley wapentake, and in the parish of Bradford, is four miles south of Keighley, containing, by the census of 1821, 4668 inhabitants.

'Gentry and Clergy: Brontë, Rev. Patrick, Haworth; Heaton, Robert, gent., Ponden Hall; Miles, Rev. Oddy, Haworth; Saunders, Rev. Moses, Haworth.'

[2] William Grimshaw (1708-1763) was Mr. Brontë's most famous predecessor as perpetual incumbent at Haworth. He was here from 1742 to his death, and struck

the present new building was opened two years later. The tower, however, remains; and the churchyard; and the house, with all its sad and sacred associations.

For a good view of Haworth we cannot, however, do better than turn to a reference-book of 1848—Pigot's Yorkshire Directory—and see the place coldly, statistically as it appeared at the moment when the Brontë children were about to become famous:—

Haworth is a chapelry, comprising the hamlets of Haworth, Stanbury, and Near and Far Oxenhope, in the parish of Bradford, and wapentake of Morley, West Riding—Haworth being ten miles from Bradford, about the same distance from Halifax, Colne, and Skipton, three and a half miles S. from Keighley, and eight from Hebden Bridge, at which latter place is a station on the Leeds and Manchester Railway. Haworth is situated on the side of a hill, and consists of one irregularly built street—the habitations in that part called Oxenhope being yet more scattered, and Stanbury still farther distant; the entire chapelry occupying a wide space. The spinning of worsted, and the manufacture of stuffs, are branches which here prevail extensively.

The church or rather chapel (subject to Bradford), dedicated to St. Michael, was rebuilt in 1755: the living is a perpetual curacy, in the presentation of the vicar of Bradford and certain trustees; the present curate is the Rev. Patrick Brontë. The other places of worship are two chapels for Baptists, one each for Primitive and Wesleyan Methodists, and another at Oxenhope for the latter denomination. There are two excellent free schools—one at Stanbury, the other, called the Free Grammar School, near Oxenhope; besides which there are several neat edifices erected for Sunday teaching. There are three annual fairs: they are held on Easter-Monday, the second Monday after St. Peter's day (old style), and the first Monday after Old Michaelmas day. The chapelry of Haworth, and its dependent hamlets, contained by the returns for 1831, 5835 inhabitants; and by the census taken in June 1841, the population amounted to 6303.

the note of revivalism in Yorkshire simultaneously with John Wesley's efforts. He died at Haworth, but was buried in Luddenden church near his wife. John Newton of the Olney Hymns wrote his *Life*. John Wesley preached at Haworth in 1757, 1761, 1766, 1772, 1786, 1788 and 1790; and George Whitefield also preached here many times.

Then we may turn to Mrs. Gaskell's own description from inquiries made on the spot soon after Charlotte Brontë's death :—

The people in Haworth were none of them very poor. Many of them were employed in the neighbouring worsted mills; a few were millowners and manufacturers in a small way; there were also some shopkeepers for the humbler and everyday wants; but for medical advice, for stationery, books, law, dress, or dainties the inhabitants had to go to Keighley. There were several Sunday-schools; the Baptists had taken the lead in instituting them, the Wesleyans had followed, the Church of England had brought up the rear. Good Mr. Grimshaw, Wesley's friend, had built a humble Methodist chapel, but it stood close to the road leading on to the moor; the Baptists then raised a place of worship, with the distinction of being a few yards back from the highway; and the Methodists have since thought it well to erect another and larger chapel, still more retired from the road. Mr. Brontë was ever on kind and friendly terms with each denomination as a body; but from individuals in the village the family stood aloof, unless some direct service was required, from the first. 'They kept themselves very close,' is the account given by those who remember Mr. and Mrs. Brontë's coming amongst them. I believe many of the Yorkshire men would object to the system of parochial visiting; their surly independence would revolt from the idea of any one having the right, from his office, to inquire into their condition, to counsel or to admonish them. The old hill spirit lingers in them which coined the rhyme, inscribed on the under part of one of the seats in the sedilia of Whalley Abbey, not many miles from Haworth:

'Who mells wi' what another does
Had best go home and shoe his goose.'

I asked an inhabitant of a district close to Haworth what sort of a clergyman they had at the church which he attended.

'A rare good one,' said he: 'he minds his own business, and ne'er troubles himself with ours.'

Haworth needs even to-day no further description, but if the village has been over-described, the house in which Mr. Brontë resided, from 1820 till his death in 1861, has

not been over-described, perhaps because for many years the vicar who succeeded Mr. Brontë did not encourage visitors.

Many changes have been made since Mr. Brontë died, but the house still retains its essentially interesting features. In the time of the Brontës, it is true, the front outlook was as desolate as to-day it is attractive. Then there was a little piece of barren ground running down to the walls of the churchyard, with here and there a currant-bush as the sole adornment. Now we see an abundance of trees and a well-kept lawn. Ellen Nussey was wont to recall seeing Emily and Anne Brontë, on a fine summer afternoon, sitting on stools in this bit of garden plucking currants from the poor insignificant bushes. There was no premonition of the time, not so far distant, when the rough doorway separating the churchyard from the garden, which was opened for their mother when they were little children, should be opened again time after time in rapid succession for their own biers to be carried through.[1] This gateway is now effectively bricked up. In the days of the Brontës it was reserved for the passage of the dead—a grim arrangement, which, strange to say, finds no place in any one of the sisters' stories. We enter the house, and the door on the right leads into Mr. Brontë's study, always called the parlour; that on the left into the dining-room, where the children spent a great portion of their lives. From childhood to womanhood, indeed, the three girls regularly breakfasted with their father in his study. In the dining-room—a square and simple room of a kind common enough in the houses of the poorer middle classes

[1] The graves rise in terraces up to the house. It was a cruel irony, considering the brief lives of Mrs. Brontë and her children, that against the wall of the church was a short headstone recording remarkable instances of longevity of the Murgatroyds of Lee: Susan, wife of John, 1785, aged 86; John, 1789, aged 88; James, their son, 1820, aged 95; Ann, his wife, 1831, aged 85; Sarah, wife of John, 1846, aged 70; and John (son of James), 1862, aged 85. United ages, 509.—See *Haworth—Past and Present*, by J. Horsfall Turner, for a full account of the Haworth tombstones.

—they ate their midday dinner, their tea and supper. Mr. Brontë joined them at tea, although he frequently dined alone in his study. The children's dinner-table has been described to me by the late Ellen Nussey, who delighted to recall her memories of her many visits to the house. At one end sat Miss Branwell, at the other, Charlotte, with Emily and Anne on either side. Branwell was then absent. The living was of the simplest. A single joint, followed invariably by one kind or another of milk-pudding. Pastry was unknown in the Brontë household. Milk-puddings, or food composed of milk and rice, would seem to have made the principal diet of Emily and Anne Brontë, and to this they added a breakfast of Scotch porridge, which they shared with their dogs. It is more interesting, perhaps, to think of all the day-dreams in that room, of the mass of writing which was achieved there, of the conversations and speculation as to the future. Miss Nussey has given a pleasant picture of twilight when Charlotte and she walked with arms encircling one another round and round the table, and Emily and Anne followed in similar fashion. There was no lack of cheerfulness and of hope at this period. Behind Mr. Brontë's studio was the kitchen; and there we may easily picture the Brontë children telling stories to Tabby or Martha, or to whatever servant reigned at the time, and learning, as all of them did, to become thoroughly domesticated—Emily most of all. Behind the dining-room was a peat-room, which, when Charlotte was married in 1854, was cleared out and converted into a little study for Mr. Nicholls. The staircase with its solid banister remains as it did half a century ago; and at its foot one is still shown the corner which tradition assigns as the scene of Emily's conflict with her dog Keeper. On the right, at the back, as you mount the staircase, was a small room allotted to Branwell as a studio. On the other side of this staircase, also at the back, was the servants' room. In the front of the

house, immediately over the dining-room, was Miss Branwell's room, afterwards the spare bedroom until Charlotte Brontë married. In that room she died. On the left, over Mr. Brontë's study, was Mr. Brontë's bedroom. It was the room which, for many years, he shared with Branwell, and it was in that room that Branwell and his father died at an interval of nearly thirteen years. On the staircase, half-way up, was a grandfather's clock, which Mr. Brontë used to wind up every night on his way to bed. He always went to bed at nine o'clock, and Miss Nussey well remembers his stentorian tones as he called out as he left his study and passed the dining-room door—'Don't be up late, children'—which they usually were. Between these two front rooms upstairs, and immediately over the passage, with a door facing the staircase, was a box room; This was the children's nursery, where for many years the children slept, and where, I believe, the bulk of their little books were compiled. Later it became Emily's bedroom.

But this is to anticipate. In September 1821 Mrs. Brontë died after less than eighteen months of Haworth. Maria, the eldest of her six children, was but eight years of age. No wonder that Mr. Brontë sought a stepmother for his little ones. Tradition has it, as we have seen, that he asked Mary Burder and Elizabeth Firth in succession, but that both these ladies refused. In any case, one may count Mr. Brontë fortunate that his wife's sister, Elizabeth Branwell, whom we have seen upon a visit to her brother-in-law in Thornton, consented to come from Penzance to watch over the six little ones. Mrs. Gaskell tells, indeed, of her distaste for Yorkshire and Haworth after her own sunny Cornish home; but it is clear that she did her duty and was profoundly esteemed by the nieces who survived her. Miss Branwell arrived at Haworth in 1822. Two years later, on July 1, 1824, her nieces, Maria and Elizabeth, were taken to the Clergy Daughters' School

at Cowan Bridge; Charlotte followed in August of that year and Emily in November. In February of 1825 Maria was taken away in ill-health, Elizabeth left in May, Charlotte and Emily in June.[1] Thus it will be seen that Charlotte's impressions were of the most transitory kind, but she always believed that the school had practically killed her two elder sisters, both of whom died soon after they arrived back in Haworth. We know how she gibbeted the school in her novel of *Jane Eyre*, and Mrs. Gaskell's identification of Lowood in that novel caused much wordy discussion in the years following Charlotte Brontë's death. That the school was bad for delicate and sensitive children seems now to be beyond question. Mr. William Carus Wilson, an energetic evangelical clergyman, may have been as well-meaning as his friends asserted, but a study of his writings[2] reveals a temperament which was in no way exaggerated as presented by Charlotte Brontë in her picture of Brocklehurst in *Jane Eyre*. There pretty well we may leave that threadbare controversy to rest.[3]

[1] The *Journal of Education* for January 1900 contained the following extracts from the school register of the Clergy Daughters' School at Casterton:—

'Charlotte Brontë. Entered August 10, 1824. Writes indifferently. Ciphers a little, and works neatly. Knows nothing of grammar, geography, history, or accomplishments. Altogether clever of her age, but knows nothing systematically (at eight years old!). Left school June 1, 1825.—Governess.'

The following entries may also be of interest:—

'Maria Brontë, aged 10 (daughter of Patrick Brontë, Haworth, near Keighley, Yorks). July 1, 1824. Reads tolerably. Writes pretty well. Ciphers a little. Works badly. Very little of geography or history. Has made some progress in reading French, but knows knothing of the language grammatically. Left February 14, 1825, in ill-health, and died May 6, 1825.'

(Her father's account of her is:—'She exhibited during her illness many symptoms of a heart under Divine influence. Died of decline.')

'Elizabeth Brontë, age 9. (Vaccinated. Scarlet fever, whooping-cough.) Reads little. Writes pretty well. Ciphers none (*sic*). Works very badly. Knows nothing of grammar, geography, history, or accomplishments. Left in ill-health, May 31, 1825. Died June 15, 1825, in decline.'

'Emily Brontë. Entered November 25, 1824, aged 6¼. Reads very prettily, and works a little. Left June 1, 1825. Subsequent career.—Governess.'

[2] See Appendix III. *The Brontës at Cowan Bridge*, by the Rev. Angus M. Mackay. Republished from *The Bookman* of October 1894.

[3] At the same time it is worth while quoting from a letter by 'A. H.' in August 1855.

A. H. was a teacher who was at Cowan Bridge during the time of the residence of the little Brontës there.

'In July 1824 the Rev. Mr. Brontë arrived at Cowan Bridge with two of his daughters, Maria and Elizabeth, 10 and 9 years of age. The children were delicate; both had but recently recovered from the measles and whooping-cough—so recently, indeed, that doubts were entertained whether they could be admitted with safety to the other pupils. They were received, however, and went on so well that in August [1] their father returned, bringing with him two more of his children—Charlotte, 9 [she was really but 8], and Emily, 6 years of age. During both these visits Mr. Brontë lodged at the school, sat at the same table with the children, saw the whole routine of the establishment, and, so far as I have ever known, was satisfied with everything that came under his observation.

'"*The two younger children enjoyed uniformly good health.*" Charlotte was a general favourite. To the best of my recollection she was never under disgrace, however slight; punishment she certainly did *not* experience while she was at Cowan Bridge.

'In size, Charlotte was remarkably diminutive; and if, as has been recently asserted, she never grew an inch after leaving the Clergy Danghters' School, she must have been a *literal dwarf*, and could not have obtained a situation as teacher in a school at Brussels, or anywhere else; the idea is absurd. In respect of the treatment of the pupils at Cowan Bridge, I will say that neither Mr. Brontë's daughters nor any other of the children were denied a sufficient quantity of food. Any statement to the contrary is entirely false. The daily dinner consisted of meat, vegetables, and pudding, in abundance; the children were permitted, and expected, to ask for whatever they desired, and were never limited.

'It has been remarked that the food of the school was such that none but starving children could eat it; and in support of this statement reference is made to a certain occasion when the medical attendant was consulted about it. In reply to this, let me say that during the spring of 1825 a low fever, although not an alarming one, prevailed in the school, and the managers, naturally anxious to ascertain whether any local cause occasioned the epidemic, took an opportunity to ask the physician's opinion of the food that happened to be then on the table. I recollect that he spoke rather scornfully of a baked rice pudding; but as the ingredients of this dish were chiefly rice, sugar, and milk, its effects could hardly have been so serious as have been affirmed. I thus furnish you with the simple fact from which those statements have been manufactured.

'I have not the least hesitation in saying that, upon the whole, the comforts were as many and the privations as few at Cowan Bridge as can well be found in so large an establishment. How far young or delicate children are able to contend with the necessary evils of a public school is, in my opinion, a very grave question, and does not enter into the present discussion.

The younger children in all larger institutions are liable to be oppressed; but the exposure to this evil at Cowan Bridge was not more than in other schools, but, as I believe, far less. Then, again, thoughtless servants will occasionally spoil food, even in private families; and in public schools they are likely to be still less particular, unless they are well looked after.

'But in this respect the institution in question compares very favourably with other and more expensive schools, as from personal experience I have reason to know.—A. H., August 1855.'—From *A Vindication of the Clergy Daughters' School and the Rev. W. Carus Wilson from the Remarks in 'The Life of Charlotte Brontë,' by the Rev H. Shepheard, M.A. London: Seeley, Jackson, and Halliday*, 1857.

---

[1] Emily did not enter the school until Nov. 25, 1824.

CHAPTER IV

A LITERARY CHILDHOOD

FROM her tenth to her fifteenth year Charlotte Brontë was at home with her brother and two sisters in the Haworth parsonage. We have many glimpses of her of an indirect character afforded of these early years. There is a copy of *The Imitation of Christ* extant, given to Charlotte in 1826, and there are other books that we know the children read during this period, including Scott's *Tales of a Grandfather.* They also commenced 'original writing compositions,' as so many children of precocious tendencies do—to the joy of fond and ambitious parents. But I am not sure that children often cultivate the minute handwriting that was affected by the Brontë prodigies. There are perhaps a hundred little manuscript books in existence, principally the work of Charlotte and Branwell, some few, however, by Emily and Anne. They were compiled in a microscopic handwriting probably from reasons of economy. Pence, we may be sure, were scarce with the little ones. The booklets were stitched and covered, sugar-paper being in most cases used for the wrappers. It is not possible to trace any particular talent in these little books, many of which bear the date 1829. Assuredly hundreds of children who have never come to fame have written quite as well. It is noteworthy, however, that the little Brontës had their heroes, who were also the heroes of the hour. They took the victorious Duke of Wellington to their hearts, and also the duke's sons, the Marquis of Douro and Lord Charles Wellesley, who figure largely in

their tiny pages. It was a life of dreams, of a kind that children delight in, that indeed makes the life of childhood ever alternately beautiful and terrible. On the wild moors behind the house there must have been in any case much supreme happiness for the little Brontës in the early years that preceded the real schooldays now opening to them.

Of the work of the Brontë children at this period a great deal might be written. Mrs. Gaskell gives a list of some eighteen booklets, but a great many more from the pen of Charlotte are in existence. Branwell was equally prolific; and of him, also, there remains an immense mass of childish effort. That Emily and Anne were industrious in a like measure there is abundant reason to believe; but very few of their juvenile efforts remain to us, apart from the unpublished fragments of later years, to which reference will be made a little later. Whether Emily and Anne on the eve of their death deliberately destroyed all their treasures, or whether they were destroyed by Charlotte in the days of her mourning, will never be known. Meanwhile one turns with interest to the efforts of Charlotte and Branwell. Charlotte's little stories commence in her thirteenth year, and go on until she is twenty-three. From thirteen to eighteen she would seem to have had one absorbing hero—the Duke of Wellington. Whether the stories be fairy tales or dramas of modern life, they all alike introduce the Marquis of Douro, who afterwards became the second Duke of Wellington, and Lord Charles Wellesley, whose son is now the third Duke of Wellington. The length of some of these fragments is indeed incredible. They fill but a few sheets of notepaper in that tiny handwriting; but when copied by zealous admirers, it is seen that more than one of them is twenty thousand words in length.[1]

The Foundling, by Captain Tree, written in 1833, is a

[1] See Appendix IV. The Brontë Manuscripts.

story of thirty-five thousands words, though the manuscript has only eighteen pages. *The Green Dwarf*, written in the same year, is even longer, and indeed after her return from Roe Head in 1832, Charlotte must have devoted herself to continuous writing. *The Adventures of Ernest Alembert* is a booklet of these years, and *Arthuriana, or Odds and Ends: being a Miscellaneous Collection of Pieces in Prose and Verse*, by Lord Charles A. F. Wellesley, is yet another.

The son of the Iron Duke is made to talk, in these little books, in a way which would have gladdened the heart of a modern interviewer :—

> 'Lord Charles,' said Mr. Rundle to me one afternoon lately, 'I have an engagement to drink tea with an old college chum this evening, so I shall give you sixty lines of the *Æneid* to get ready during my absence. If it is not ready by the time I come back you know the consequences.' 'Very well, sir,' said I, bringing out the books with a prodigious bustle, and making a show as if I intended to learn a whole book instead of sixty lines of the *Æneid*. This appearance of industry, however, lasted no longer than until the old gentleman's back was turned. No sooner had he fairly quitted the room than I flung aside the musty tomes, took my cap, and speeding through chamber, hall, and gallery, was soon outside the gates of Waterloo Palace.'

The Secret, another story, of which Mrs. Gaskell gave a facsimile of the first page, was also written in 1833, and indeed in this, her seventeenth year, Charlotte Brontë must have written as much as in any year of her life. When at Roe Head, 1831-2, she would seem to have worked at her studies, and particularly her drawing; but in the interval between Cowan Bridge and Roe Head she wrote a great deal. The earliest manuscripts in my possession bear date 1829—that is to say, in Charlotte's thirteenth year. They are her *Tales of the Islanders*, which extend to four little volumes, in brown paper covers, neatly inscribed 'First Volume,' 'Second Volume,' and so

on. The Duke is of absorbing importance in these 'Tales.' 'One evening the Duke of Wellington was writing in his room in Downing Street. He was reposing at his ease in a simple easy-chair, smoking a homely tobacco-pipe, for he disdained all the modern frippery of cigars, . . .' and so on in an abundance of childish imaginings. *The Search after Happiness* and *Characters of Great Men of the Present Time* were also written in 1829. Perhaps the only juvenile fragment which is worth anything is also the only one in which she escapes from the Wellington enthusiasm. It has an interest, moreover, in indicating that Charlotte in her girlhood heard something of her father's native land. It is called—

AN ADVENTURE IN IRELAND

During my travels in the south of Ireland the following adventure happened to me. One evening in the month of August, after a long walk, I was ascending the mountain which overlooks the village of Cahin, when I suddenly came in sight of a fine old castle. It was built upon a rock, and behind it was a large wood and before it was a river. Over the river was a bridge, which formed the approach to the castle. When I arrived at the bridge I stood still awhile to enjoy the prospect around me: far below was the wide sheet of still water in which the reflection of the pale moon was not disturbed by the smallest wave; in the valley was the cluster of cabins which is known by the appellation of Cahin, and beyond these were the mountains of Killala. Over all, the grey robe of twilight was now stealing with silent and scarcely perceptible advances. No sound except the hum of the distant village and the sweet song of the nightingale in the wood behind me broke upon the stillness of the scene. While I was contemplating this beautiful prospect, a gentleman, whom I had not before observed, accosted me with 'Good evening, sir; are you a stranger in these parts?' I replied that I was. He then asked me where I was going to stop for the night; I answered that I intended to sleep somewhere in the village. 'I am afraid you will find very bad accommodation there,' said the gentleman; 'but if you will take up your quarters with me at the

castle, you are welcome.' I thanked him for his kind offer, and accepted it.

When we arrived at the castle I was shown into a large parlour, in which was an old lady sitting in an arm-chair by the fireside, knitting. On the rug lay a very pretty tortoise-shell cat. As soon as mentioned, the old lady rose; and when Mr. O'Callaghan (for that, I learned, was his name) told her who I was, she said in the most cordial tone that I was welcome, and asked me to sit down. In the course of conversation I learned that she was Mr. O'Callaghan's mother, and that his father had been dead about a year. We had sat about an hour, when supper was announced, and after supper Mr. O'Callaghan asked me if I should like to retire for the night. I answered in the affirmative, and a little boy was commissioned to show me to my apartment. It was a snug, clean, and comfortable little old-fashioned room at the top of the castle. As soon as we had entered, the boy, who appeared to be a shrewd, good-tempered little fellow, said with a shrug of the shoulder, 'If it was going to bed I was, it shouldn't be here that you'd catch me.' 'Why?' said I. 'Because,' replied the boy, 'they say that the ould masther's ghost has been seen sitting on that there chair.' 'And have you seen him?' 'No; but I've heard him washing his hands in that basin often and often.' 'What is your name, my little fellow?' 'Dennis Mulready, please your honour.' 'Well, good-night to you.' 'Good-night, masther; and may the saints keep you from all fairies and brownies,' said Dennis as he left the room.

As soon as I had laid down I began to think of what the boy had been telling me, and I confess I felt a strange kind of fear, and once or twice I even thought I could discern something white through the darkness which surrounded me. At length, by the help of reason, I succeeded in mastering these, what some would call idle fancies, and fell asleep. I had slept about an hour when a strange sound awoke me, and I saw looking through my curtains a skeleton wrapped in a white sheet. I was overcome with terror and tried to scream, but my tongue was paralysed and my whole frame shook with fear. In a deep hollow voice it said to me, 'Arise, that I may show thee this world's wonders,' and in an instant I found myself encompassed with clouds and darkness. But soon the roar of mighty waters fell upon my ear, and I saw some clouds of spray arising from high falls that rolled in awful majesty down tremendous precipices, and then foamed and thun-

dered in the gulf beneath as if they had taken up their unquiet abode in some giant's cauldron. But soon the scene changed, and I found myself in the mines of Cracone. There were high pillars and stately arches, whose glittering splendour was never excelled by the brightest fairy palaces. There were not many lamps, only those of a few poor miners, whose rough visages formed a striking contrast to the dazzling figures and grandeur which surrounded them. But in the midst of all this magnificence I felt an indescribable sense of fear and terror, for the sea raged above us, and by the awful and tumultuous noises of roaring winds and dashing waves, it seemed as if the storm was violent. And now the mossy pillars groaned beneath the pressure of the ocean, and the glittering arches seemed about to be overwhelmed. When I heard the rushing waters and saw a mighty flood rolling towards me, I gave a loud shriek of terror. The scene vanished, and I found myself in a wide desert full of barren rocks and high mountains. As I was approaching one of the rocks, in which there was a large cave, my foot stumbled and I fell. Just then I heard a deep growl, and saw by the unearthly light of his own fiery eyes a royal lion rousing himself from his kingly slumbers. His terrible eye was fixed upon me, and the desert rang and the rocks echoed with the tremendous roar of fierce delight which he uttered as he sprang towards me. 'Well, masther, it's been a windy night, though it's fine now,' said Dennis, as he drew the window-curtain and let the bright rays of the morning sun into the little old-fashioned room at the top of O'Callaghan Castle. C. BRONTË.

April the 28th, 1829.

Six numbers of *The Young Men's Magazine* were written in 1829: a very juvenile poem, *The Evening Walk*, by the Marquis of Douro, in 1830; and another, of greater literary value, *The Violet*, in the same year. In 1831 we have an unfinished poem, *The Trumpet Hath Sounded*; and in 1832, a very long poem called *The Bridal*. Some of them, as for example a poem called *Richard Cœur de Lion and Blondel*, are written in penny and twopenny notebooks of the kind used by laundresses. Occasionally her father has purchased a sixpenny book and has written within the cover—

All that is written in this book must be in a good, plain, and legible hand.—P. B.

While upon this topic, I may as well carry the record up to the date of publication of Currer Bell's poems. *A Leaf from an Unopened Volume* was written in 1834, as were also *The Death of Darius*, and *Corner Dishes. Saul: a Poem*, was written in 1835, and a number of other still unpublished verses. There is a story called *Lord Douro*, bearing date 1837, and a manuscript book of verses of 1838, but that pretty well exhausts the manuscripts before me previous to the days of serious literary activity. During the years as private governess (1839-1841) and the Brussels experiences (1842-1843), Charlotte would seem to have put all literary effort on one side.

There is only one letter of Charlotte Brontë's childhood. It is endorsed by Mr. Brontë on the cover 'Charlotte's First Letter,' possibly for the guidance of Mrs. Gaskell, who may perhaps have thought it of insufficient importance. That can scarcely be the opinion of any one to-day. Charlotte, aged thirteen, is staying with the Fennells, her mother's friends of those early love-letters.

Letter 1

TO THE REV. P. BRONTË

PARSONAGE HOUSE, CROSSTONE,[1]
September 23*rd*, 1829.

MY DEAR PAPA,—At Aunt's request I write these lines to inform you that 'if all be well' we shall be at home on Friday by dinner-time, when we hope to find you in good health. On account of the bad weather we have not been out much, but notwithstanding we have spent our time very pleasantly, between reading, working, and learning our lessons, which Uncle Fennell has been so kind as to teach us every day. Branwell has taken two sketches from nature, and Emily, Anne, and myself have likewise each of us drawn a piece from some views of the lakes

[1] Crosstone is near Todmorden and about twelve miles from Haworth.

which Mr. Fennell brought with him from Westmoreland. The whole of these he intends keeping. Mr. Fennell is sorry he cannot accompany us to Haworth on Friday, for want of room, but hopes to have the pleasure of seeing you soon. All unite in sending their kind love with your affectionate daughter,

CHARLOTTE BRONTË.

Mrs. Gaskell gives us an interesting glimpse of the family at this period :—

Miss Branwell instructed the children at regular hours in all she could teach, converting her bedchamber into their schoolroom. Their father was in the habit of relating to them any public news in which he felt an interest; and from the opinions of his strong and independent mind they would gather much food for thought; but I do not know whether he gave them any direct instruction. Charlotte's deep, thoughtful spirit appears to have felt almost painfully the tender responsibility which rested upon her with reference to her remaining sisters. She was only two years older than Emily; but Emily and Anne were simply companions and playmates, while Charlotte was motherly friend and guardian to both; and this loving assumption of duties beyond her years made her feel considerably older than she really was.

Patrick Branwell, their only brother, was a boy of remarkable promise, and, in some ways, of extraordinary precocity of talent. Mr. Brontë's friends advised him to send his son to school; but, remembering both the strength of will of his own youth and his mode of employing it, he believed that Patrick was better at home, and that he himself could teach him well, as he had taught others before. So Patrick—or, as his family called him, Branwell—remained at Haworth, working hard for some hours a day with his father; but, when the time of the latter was taken up with his parochial duties, the boy was thrown into chance companionship with the lads of the village—for youth will to youth, and boys will to boys.

CHAPTER V

SCHOOL-DAYS AT ROE HEAD

From 1825 to 1831 Charlotte Brontë was at home with her sisters, reading and writing as we have seen, but learning nothing very systematically. In 1831-32 she was a boarder at Miss Wooler's school at Roe Head, some twenty miles from Haworth. Miss Wooler lived to a green old age, dying in the year 1885. She would seem to have been very proud of her famous pupil, and could not have been blind to her capacity in the earlier years. Charlotte was with her as governess at Roe Head, and later at Dewsbury Moor. It is quite clear that Miss Brontë was head of the school in all intellectual pursuits, and she made two firm friends—Ellen Nussey and Mary Taylor. A very fair measure of French and some skill in drawing appear to have been the most striking accomplishments which Charlotte carried back from Roe Head to Haworth. There are some twenty drawings of about this date, and a translation into English verse of the first book of Voltaire's *Henriade*. With Ellen Nussey commenced a friendship which terminated only with the pencilled notes written from Charlotte Brontë's death-bed. The following letter was the first of a correspondence that was to continue without any intermittence to the end of the writer's life. Charlotte entered Miss Wooler's school in January 1831, and the first letter was written in the holidays that followed a few months later. It has a note of formality that was to break down very quickly :—

Letter 2

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

May 31st, 1831.

DEAR MISS NUSSEY,—I take advantage of the earliest opportunity to thank you for the letter you favoured me with last week, and to apologise for having so long neglected to write to you; indeed, I believe this will be the first letter or note I have ever addressed to you. I am extremely obliged to —— for her kind invitation, and I assure you that I should have very much liked to hear Mr. ——'s Lectures on Galvanism, as they would doubtless have been amusing and instructive. But we are often compelled to bend our inclination to our duty (as Miss Wooler observed the other day), and since there are so many holidays this half-year, it would have appeared almost unreasonable to ask for an extra holiday; besides, we should perhaps have got behind hand with our lessons, so that everything considered, it is perhaps as well that circumstances have deprived us of this pleasure.—Believe me to remain, your affectionate friend, C. BRONTË.

Her other friend, Mary Taylor, was long afterwards to give Mrs. Gaskell her earliest impression of Charlotte :—

Mary Taylor's Narrative.

I first saw her coming out of a covered cart, in very old-fashioned clothes, and looking very cold and miserable. She was coming to school at Miss Wooler's. When she appeared in the schoolroom her dress was changed, but just as old. She looked a little, old woman, so short-sighted that she always appeared to be seeking something, and moving her head from side to side to catch a sight of it. She was very shy and nervous, and spoke with a strong Irish accent. When a book was given her she dropped her head over it till her nose nearly touched it, and when she was told to hold her head up, up went the book after it, still close to her nose, so that it was not possible to help laughing.

We thought her very ignorant, for she had never learnt grammar at all, and very little geography.

She would confound us by knowing things that were out of our range altogether. She was acquainted with most of the short pieces of poetry that we had to learn by heart: would tell us the

Miss Ellen Nussey

Miss Mary Taylor

authors, the poems they were taken from, and sometimes repeat a page or two, and tell us the plot. She had a habit of writing in italics (printing characters), and said she had learnt it by writing in their magazine. They brought out a 'magazine' once a month, and wished it to look as like print as possible. She told us a tale out of it. No one wrote in it, and no one read it, but herself, her brother, and two sisters. She promised to show me some of these magazines, but retracted it afterwards, and would never be persuaded to do so. In our play hours she sat or stood still, with a book, if possible. Some of us once urged her to be on our side in a game at ball. She said she had never played, and could not play. We made her try, but soon found that she could not see the ball, so we put her out. She took all our proceedings with pliable indifference, and always seemed to need a previous resolution to say 'No' to anything. She used to go and stand under the trees in the playground, and say it was pleasanter. She endeavoured to explain this, pointing out the shadows, the peeps of sky, etc. We understood but little of it. She said that at Cowan Bridge she used to stand in the burn, on a stone, to watch the water flow by. I told her she should have gone fishing; she said she never wanted. She always showed physical feebleness in everything. She ate no animal food at school. It was about this time I told her she was very ugly. Some years afterwards I told her I thought I had been very impertinent. She replied, 'You did me a great deal of good, Polly, so don't repent of it.' She used to draw much better, and more quickly, than anything we had seen before, and knew much about celebrated pictures and painters. Whenever an opportunity offered of examining a picture or cut of any kind, she went over it piecemeal, with her eyes close to the paper, looking so long that we used to ask her 'what she saw in it.' She could always see plenty, and explained it very well. She made poetry and drawing at least exceedingly interesting to me; and then I got the habit, which I have yet, of referring mentally to her opinion on all matters of that kind, along with many more, resolving to describe such and such things to her, until I start at the recollection that I never shall.

We used to be furious politicians, as one could hardly help being in 1832. She knew the names of the two Ministers; the one that resigned, and the one that succeeded and passed the Reform Bill. She worshipped the Duke of Wellington, but said that Sir Robert Peel was not to be trusted; he did not act from

principle, like the rest, but from expediency. I, being of the furious Radical party, told her, 'How could any of them trust one another? they were all of them rascals!' Then she would launch out into praises of the Duke of Wellington, referring to his actions; which I could not contradict, as I knew nothing about him. She said she had taken interest in politics ever since she was five years old. She did not get her opinions from her father—that is, not directly—but from the papers, etc., he preferred.

She used to speak of her two elder sisters, Maria and Elizabeth, who died at Cowan Bridge. I used to believe them to have been wonders of talent and kindness. She told me, early one morning, that she had just been dreaming: she had been told that she was wanted in the drawing-room, and it was Maria and Elizabeth. I was eager for her to go on, and when she said there was no more, I said, 'But go on! *Make it out!* I know you can.' She said she would not; she wished she had not dreamed, for it did not go on nicely; they were changed; they had forgotten what they used to care for. They were very fashionably dressed, and began criticising the room, etc.

This habit of 'making out' interests for themselves, that most children get who have none in actual life, was very strong in her. The whole family used to 'make out' histories, and invent characters and events. I told her sometimes they were like growing potatoes in a cellar. She said, sadly, 'Yes! I know we are!'

Some one at school said she 'was always talking about clever people—Johnson, Sheridan,' etc. She said, 'Now you don't know the meaning of *clever*. Sheridan might be clever; yes, Sheridan was clever—scamps often are—but Johnson hadn't a spark of cleverality in him.' No one appreciated the opinion; they made some trivial remark about '*cleverality*,' and she said no more.

This is the epitome of her life. At our house she had just as little chance of a patient hearing, for though not school-girlish we were more intolerant. We had a rage for practicality, and laughed all poetry to scorn. Neither she nor we had any idea but that our opinions were the opinions of all the *sensible* people in the world, and we used to astonish each other at every sentence. . . . Charlotte, at school, had no plan of life beyond what circumstances made for her. She knew that she must provide for herself, and chose her trade; at least chose to begin it once. Her idea of self-improvement ruled her even at school. It was to cultivate her tastes. She always said there was enough of hard practicality and

useful knowledge forced on us by necessity, and that the thing most needed was to soften and refine our minds. She picked up every scrap of information concerning painting, sculpture, poetry, music, etc., as if it were gold.[1]

All that we know of Charlotte Brontë during this year of schooling at Roe Head we learn from her two friends,[2] apart from a letter to her brother which I give here:—

Letter 3

TO BRANWELL BRONTË

ROE HEAD, *May* 17*th*, 1831.

DEAR BRANWELL,—As usual I address my weekly letter to you, because to you I find the most to say. I feel exceedingly anxious to know how and in what state you arrived at home after your long and (I should think) very fatiguing journey. I could perceive when you arrived at Roe Head that you were very much tired, though you refused to acknowledge it. After you were gone, many questions and subjects of conversation recurred to me which I had intended to mention to you, but quite forgot them in the agitation which I felt at the totally unexpected pleasure of seeing you. Lately I had begun to think that I had lost all the interest which I used formerly to take in politics, but the extreme pleasure I felt at the news of the Reform Bill's being thrown out by the House of Lords, and of the expulsion or resignation of Earl Grey, etc., etc., convinced me that I have not as yet lost *all* my penchant for politics. I am extremely glad that aunt has consented to take in *Fraser's Magazine*, for though I know from your description of its general contents it will be rather uninteresting when compared with *Blackwood*, still it will be better than remaining the whole year without being able to obtain a sight of any periodical publication whatever; and such would

[1] Letter from Mary Taylor to Mrs. Gaskell, dated January 18, 1856, and written from New Zealand.

[2] There are only two letters of Charlotte's written at Roe Head that are known to me. One is dated May 1831, and was written to Mrs. Franks (Miss Elizabeth Firth). It should rightly be Letter 3 of this Collection, but it seems more natural to place it in Appendix II. with the other material kindly supplied by Professor Moore Smith. The other, to her brother, appears in this chapter.

assuredly be our case, as in the little wild, moorland village where we reside, there would be no possibility of borrowing or obtaining a work of that description from a circulating library. I hope with you that the present delightful weather may contribute to the perfect restoration of our dear papa's health, and that it may give aunt pleasant reminiscences of the salubrious climate of her native place.

With love to all,—Believe me, dear Branwell, to remain your affectionate sister, CHARLOTTE.

There is absolutely nothing more to add, and so I offer no apology for reproducing Ellen Nussey's narrative, which, unlike Mary Taylor's, has never been reprinted in book form. It first appeared in an American magazine.[1] It is thus she writes :—

Ellen Nussey's Narrative.

Arriving at school about a week after the general assembly of the pupils, I was not expected to accompany them when the time came for their daily exercise, but while they were out, I was led into the schoolroom, and quietly left to make my observations. I had come to the conclusion that it was very nice and comfortable for a schoolroom, though I had little knowledge of schoolrooms in general, when, turning to the window to observe the look-out, I became aware for the first time that I was not alone; there was a silent, weeping, dark little figure in the large bay-window; she must, I thought, have risen from the floor. As soon as I had recovered from my surprise, I went from the far end of the room, where the book-shelves were, the contents of which I must have contemplated with a little awe in anticipation of coming studies. A crimson cloth covered the long table down the centre of the room, which helped, no doubt, to hide the shrinking little figure from my view. I was touched and troubled at once to see her so sad and so tearful.

I said *shrinking*, because her attitude, when I saw her, was that of one who wished to hide both herself and her grief. She did not shrink, however, when spoken to, but in very few words confessed she was 'homesick.' After a little of such comfort as could be offered, it was suggested to her that there was a possi-

[1] *Scribner's Magazine*, 'Reminiscences of Charlotte Brontë,' by 'E.,' vol. ii. 1871. Reprinted in the Brontë Society's *Transactions*, Part x. 1899.

bility of her too having to comfort the speaker by-and-by for the same cause. A faint quivering smile then lighted her face; the tear-drops fell; we silently took each other's hands, and at once we felt that genuine sympathy which always consoles, even though it be unexpressed. We did not talk or stir till we heard the approaching footsteps of other pupils coming in from their play; it had been a game called 'French and English,' which was always very vigorously played, but in which Charlotte Brontë never could be induced to join. Perhaps the merry voices contesting for victory, which reached our ears in the schoolroom, jarred upon her then sensitive misery, and caused her ever after to dislike the game; but she was physically unequal to that exercise of muscle, which was keen enjoyment to strong, healthy girls, both older and younger than herself. Miss Wooler's system of education required that a good deal of her pupils' work should be done in classes, and to effect this, new pupils had generally a season of solitary study; but Charlotte's fervent application made this period a very short one to her—she was quickly up to the needful standard, and ready for the daily routine and arrangement of studies, and as quickly did she outstrip her companions, rising from the bottom of the classes to the top, a position which, when she had once gained, she never had to regain. She was first in everything but play, yet never was a word heard of envy or jealousy from her companions; every one felt she had won her laurels by an amount of diligence and hard labour of which they were incapable. She never exulted in her successes or seemed conscious of them; her mind was so wholly set on attaining knowledge that she apparently forgot all else.

Charlotte's appearance did not strike me at first as it did others. I saw her grief, not herself particularly, till afterwards. She never seemed to me the unattractive little person others designated her, but certainly she was at this time anything but *pretty*; even her good points were lost. Her naturally beautiful hair of soft silky brown being then dry and frizzy-looking, screwed up in tight little curls, showing features that were all the plainer from her exceeding thinness and want of complexion, she looked 'dried in.' A dark, rusty green stuff dress of old-fashioned make detracted still more from her appearance; but let her wear what she might or do what she would, she had ever the demeanour of a born gentlewoman; vulgarity was an element

that never won the slightest affinity with her nature. Some of the elder girls, who had been years at school, thought her ignorant. This was true in one sense; ignorant she was indeed in the elementary education which is given in schools, but she far surpassed her most advanced school-fellows in knowledge of what was passing in the world at large, and in the literature of her country. She knew a thousand things unknown to them.

She had taught herself a little French before she came to school; this little knowledge of the language was very useful to her when afterwards she was engaged in translation or dictation. She soon began to make a good figure in French lessons. Music she wished to acquire, for which she had both ear and taste, but her near-sightedness caused her to stoop so dreadfully in order to see her notes, she was dissuaded from persevering in the acquirement, especially as she had at this time an invincible objection to wearing glasses. Her very taper fingers, tipped with the most circular nails, did not seem very suited for instrumental execution; but when wielding the pen or the pencil, they appeared in the very office they were created for.

Her appetite was of the smallest; for years she had not tasted animal food; she had the greatest dislike to it; she always had something specially provided for her at our midday repast. Towards the close of the first half-year she was induced to take, by little and little, meat gravy with vegetable, and in the second half-year she commenced taking a very small portion of animal food daily. She then grew a little bit plumper, looked younger and more animated, though she was never what is called lively at this period. She always seemed to feel that a deep responsibility rested upon her; that she was an object of expense to those at home, and that she must use every moment to attain the purpose for which she was sent to school, *i.e.* to fit herself for governess life. She had almost too much opportunity for her conscientious diligence; we were so little restricted in our doings, the industrious might accomplish the appointed tasks of the day and enjoy a little leisure, but she chose in many things to do double lessons when not prevented by class arrangement or a companion. In two of her studies she was associated with her friend, and great was her distress if her companion failed to be ready, when she was, with the lesson of the day. She liked the stated task to be over, that she might be free to pursue her self-appointed ones. Such, however, was her conscientiousness that she never did what some girls

think it generous to do; generous and unselfish though she was, she never whispered help to a companion in class (as she might have done) to rid herself of the trouble of having to appear again. All her school-fellows regarded her, I believe, as a model of high rectitude, close application, and great abilities. She did not play or amuse herself when others did. When her companions were merry round the fire, or otherwise enjoying themselves during the twilight, which was always a precious time of relaxation, she would be kneeling close to the window busy with her studies, and this would last so long that she was accused of seeing in the dark; yet though she did not play, as girls style play, she was ever ready to help with suggestions in those plays which required taste or arrangement.

When her companions formed the idea of having a coronation performance on a half-holiday, it was Charlotte Brontë who drew up the programme, arranged the titles to be adopted by her companions for the occasion, wrote the invitations to those who were to grace the ceremony, and selected for each a title, either for sound that pleased the ear or for historical association. The preparations for these extra half-holidays (which were very rare occurrences) sometimes occupied spare moments for weeks before the event. On this occasion Charlotte prepared a very elegant little speech for the one who was selected to present the crown. Miss Wooler's younger sister consented after much entreaty to be crowned as our queen (a very noble, stately queen she made), and did her pupils all the honour she could by adapting herself to the rôle of the moment. The following exquisite little speech shows Charlotte's aptitude, even then, at giving fitting expression to her thoughts:—

'Powerful Queen! Accept this Crown, the symbol of dominion, from the hands of your faithful and affectionate subjects! And if their earnest and united wishes have any efficacy, you will long be permitted to reign over this peaceful, though circumscribed, empire.

'(Signed, etc., etc.),

'Your loyal subjects.'

The little fête finished off with what was called a ball; but for lack of numbers we had to content ourselves with one quadrille and two Scotch reels. Last of all there was a supper, which was considered very *recherché*, most of it having been coaxed out

of yielding mammas and elder sisters, in addition to some wise expenditure of pocket-money. The grand feature, however, was the attendance of a mulatto servant. We descended for a moment from our assumed dignities to improvise this distinguishing appanage. The liveliest of our party, 'Jessie Yorke,' volunteered this office, and surpassed our expectations. Charlotte evidently enjoyed the fun, in her own quiet way, as much as any one, and ever after with great zest helped, when with old schoolfellows, to recall the performances of the exceptional half-holidays.

About a month after the assembling of the school, one of the pupils had an illness. There was great competition among the girls for permission to sit with the invalid. Charlotte was never of the number, though she was as assiduous in kindness and attention as the rest in spare moments: but to sit with the patient was indulgence and leisure, and these she would not permit herself.

It was shortly after this illness that Charlotte caused such a panic of terror by her thrilling relations of the wanderings of a somnambulist. She brought together all the horrors her imagination could create, from surging seas, raging breakers, towering castle walls, high precipices, invisible chasms and dangers. Having wrought these materials to the highest pitch of effect, she brought out, in almost cloud-height, her somnambulist, walking on shaking turrets,—all told in a voice that conveyed more than words alone can express. A shivering terror seized the recovered invalid; a pause ensued; then a subdued cry of pain came from Charlotte herself, with a terrified command to others to call for help. She was in bitter distress. Something like remorse seemed to linger in her mind after this incident; for weeks there was no prevailing on her to resume her tales, and she never again created terrors for her listeners. Tales, however, were made again in time, till Miss W. discovered there was 'late talking.' That was forbidden; but understanding it was 'late talk' only which was prohibited, we talked and listened to tales again, not expecting to hear Miss Wooler say one morning, 'All the ladies who talked last night must pay fines. I am sure Miss Brontë and Miss Nussey were not of the number.' Miss Brontë and Miss Nussey were, however, transgressors like the rest, and rather enjoyed the fact of having to pay like them, till they saw Miss Wooler's grieved and disappointed look. It was then a distress that they had failed where they were reckoned upon, though unintentionally. This was the only school-fine that Charlotte ever incurred. At the close of the first half-

year, Charlotte bore off three prizes. For one she had to draw lots with her friend—a moment of painful suspense to both, for neither wished to deprive the other of her reward. Happily, Charlotte won it, and so had the gratifying pleasure of carrying home three tangible proofs of her goodness and industry. Miss Wooler had two badges of conduct for her pupils which were wonderfully effective, except with the most careless. A black ribbon, worn in the style of the Order of the Garter, which the pupils passed from one to the other for any breach of rules, unladylike manners, or incorrect grammar. Charlotte might, in her very earliest school-days, have worn 'the mark,' as we styled it, but I never remember her having it. The silver medal, which was the badge for fulfilment of duties, she won the right to in her first half-year. This she never afterwards forfeited, and it was presented to her on leaving school.[1] She was only three half-years at school. In this time she went through all the elementary teaching contained in our school-books. She was in the habit of committing long pieces of poetry to memory, and seemed to do so with real enjoyment and hardly any effort.

In these early days, when she was certain of being quite alone with her friend, she would talk much of her two dead sisters, Maria and Elizabeth. Her love for them was most intense; a kind of adoration dwelt in her feelings, which, as she conversed, almost imparted itself to her listener.

She described Maria as a little mother among the rest, superhuman in goodness and cleverness. But the most touching of all were the revelations of her sufferings—how she suffered with the sensibility of a grown-up person, and endured with a patience and fortitude that were Christ-like. Charlotte would still weep and suffer when thinking of her. She talked of Elizabeth also, but never with the anguish of expression which accompanied her recollections of Maria. When surprise was expressed that she should know so much about her sisters when they were so young, and she herself still younger, she said she began to analyse character when she was five years old, and instanced two guests who were at her home for a day or two, and of whom she had taken stock, and of whom after-knowledge confirmed first impressions.

During one of our brief holidays Charlotte was guest in a family who had known her father when he was a curate in their parish. They were naturally inclined to show kindness to his daughter,

[1] It is now in the Brontë Museum at Haworth.

but the kindness here took a form which was little agreeable. They had had no opportunity of knowing her abilities or disposition, and they took her shyness and smallness as indications of extreme youth. She was slow, very slow, to express anything that bordered on ingratitude, but here she was mortified and hurt. 'They took me for a child, and treated me just like one,' she said. I can now recall the expression of that honest face as she added, 'one tall lady *would* nurse me.'

The tradition of a lady ghost who moved about in rustling silk in the upper stories of Roe Head had a great charm for Charlotte. She was a ready listener to any girl who could relate stories of others having seen her; but on Miss Wooler hearing us talk of our ghost, she adopted an effective measure for putting our belief in such an existence to the test, by selecting one or other from among us to ascend the stairs after the dimness of evening hours had set in, to bring something down which could easily be found. No ghost made herself visible even to the frightened imaginations of the foolish and the timid; the whitened face of apprehension soon disappeared, nerves were braced, and a general laugh soon set us all right again.

It was while Charlotte was at school that she imbibed the germ of many of those characters which she afterwards produced in *Shirley*; but no one could have imagined that, in the unceasing industry of her daily applications, she was receiving any kind of impress external to her school-life.

She was particularly impressed with the goodness and saintliness of one of Miss Wooler's guests—the Miss Ainley of *Shirley*, long since gone to her rest. The character is not, of course, a literal portrait, for the very reasons Charlotte herself gave. She said: 'You are not to suppose any of the characters in *Shirley* intended as literal portraits. It would not suit the rules of art nor of my own feelings to write in that style. We only suffer reality to *suggest*, never to *dictate*. Qualities I have seen, loved, and admired, are here and there put in as decorative gems, to be preserved in that setting.' I may remark here that nothing angered Charlotte more, than for any one to suppose they could not be in her society without incurring the risk of 'being put in her books.' She always stoutly maintained she never thought of persons in this light when she was with them.

In the seldom-recurring holidays Charlotte made sometimes short visits with those of her companions whose homes were

within reach of school. Here she made acquaintance with the scenes and prominent characters of the Luddite period; her father materially helped to fix her impressions, for he had held more than one curacy in the very neighbourhood which she describes in *Shirley*. He was present in some of the scenes, an active participator as far as his position permitted. Sometimes on the defensive, sometimes aiding the sufferers, uniting his strength and influence with Mr. Helstone of *Shirley*. Between these two men there seems to have been in some respects a striking affinity of character which Charlotte was not slow to perceive, and she blended the two into one, though she never personally beheld the original of Mr. Helstone, except once when she was ten years old. He was a man of remarkable vigour and energy, both of mind and will. An absolute disciplinarian, he was sometimes called 'Duke Ecclesiastic,' a very Wellington in the Church.

Mr. Brontë used to delight in recalling the days he spent in the vicinity of this man. Many a breakfast hour he enlivened by his animated relations of his friend's unflinching courage and dauntless self-reliance—how the ignorant and prejudiced population around misunderstood and misrepresented his worthiest deeds. In depicting the Luddite period, Charlotte had the power of giving an almost literal description of the scenes then enacted, for in addition to her father's personal acquaintance with what occurred, she had likewise the aid of authentic records of the eventful time, courteously lent to her by the editors of the *Leeds Mercury*.

I must not forget to state that no girl in the school was equal to Charlotte in Sunday lessons. Her acquaintance with Holy Writ surpassed others in this as in everything else. She was very familiar with all the sublimest passages, especially those in Isaiah, in which she took great delight. Her confirmation took place while she was at school, and in her preparation for that, as in all other studies, she distinguished herself by application and proficiency.

At school she acquired that habit which she and her sisters kept up to the very last, that of pacing to and fro in the room. In days when out-of-door exercise was impracticable, Miss Wooler would join us in our evening hour of relaxation and converse (for which she had rare talent); her pupils used to hang about her as she walked up and down the room, delighted to listen to her, or have a chance of being nearest in the walk. The

last day Charlotte was at school she seemed to realise what a sedate, hard-working season it had been to her. She said, 'I should for once like to feel *out and out* a schoolgirl; let us run round the fruit garden (running was what she never did); perhaps we shall meet some one, or we may have a fine for trespass.' She evidently was longing for some never-to-be-forgotten incident. Nothing, however, arose from her little enterprise. She had to leave school as calmly and quietly as she had lived there.

CHAPTER VI

HAWORTH, 1832-1835

After eighteen months of school-life at Roe Head Charlotte Brontë returned to her home once more. But the world had changed for her. She had enlarged her knowledge of life. She could write to one or other of her two friends, and she could continue her interest in some other of her old schoolfellows—'little Miss Boisterous' or Martha Taylor, for example, to whom there is a reference in the following letter written during the Christmas holidays:—

Letter 4

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

Haworth, *January* 13*th*, 1832.

Dear Ellen,—The receipt of your letter gave me an agreeable surprise, for, notwithstanding your faithful promises, you must excuse me if I say that I had little confidence in their fulfilment, knowing that when schoolgirls once get home they willingly abandon every recollection which tends to remind them of school, and, indeed, they find such an infinite variety of circumstances to engage their attention, and employ their leisure hours, that they are easily persuaded that they have no *time* to fulfil promises made at school. It gave me great pleasure, however, to find that you and Miss Taylor are exceptions to the general rule. I am sorry to hear that —— has been ill; likewise that Miss Wooler has suffered from bad colds. The cholera still seems slowly advancing, but let us yet hope, knowing that all things are under the guidance of a Merciful Providence. England has hitherto been highly favoured, for the disease has neither raged with the astounding violence, nor extended itself with the frightful rapidity which marks its progress in many of the continental countries.

I am glad to hear Mr. —— was pleased with Mercy's drawings. Tell her I hope she will derive benefit from the perusal of Cobbett's lucubrations, but I beg she will on no account burden her memory with passages to be repeated for my edification, lest I should not appreciate either her kindness or their merit, since that worthy personage and his principles (whether private or political) are no great favourites of mine. Remember me to ——, give my love to dear Mary Taylor and little Miss Boisterous, and accept the same, dearest Ellen, from your affectionate friend,

CHARLOTTE BRONTË.

Letter 5

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *July 21st*, 1832.

MY DEAREST ELLEN,—Your kind and interesting letter gave me the sincerest pleasure. I have been expecting to hear from you almost every day since my arrival at home, and I at length began to despair of receiving the wished-for letter. You ask me to give you a description of the manner in which I have passed every day since I left school; this is soon done, as an account of one day is an account of all. In the mornings from 9 o'clock to half-past 12, I instruct my sisters and draw, then we walk till dinner, after dinner I sew till tea time, and after tea I either read, write, do a little fancy work, or draw, as I please. Thus in one delightful, though somewhat monotonous course, my life is passed. I have only been out to tea twice since I came home. We are expecting company this afternoon, and on Tuesday next we shall have all the female teachers of the Sunday-school to tea. I do hope, my dearest, that you will return to school again for your own sake, though for mine I would rather that you would remain at home, as we shall then have more frequent opportunities of correspondence with each other. Should your friends decide against your returning to school, I know you have too much good sense and right feeling not to strive earnestly for your own improvement. Your natural abilities are excellent, and, under the direction of a judicious and able friend (and I know you have many such), you might acquire a decided taste for elegant literature and even poetry, which, indeed, is included under that general term. I was very much disappointed by your not sending

the hair; you may be sure, my dearest, that I would not grudge double postage to obtain it, but I must offer the same excuse for not sending you any. My aunt and sisters desire their love to you, remember me kindly to your mother and sisters, and accept all the fondest expressions of genuine attachment,—From your real friend, CHARLOTTE BRONTË.

P.S.—Remember the mutual promise we made of a regular correspondence with each other. Excuse all faults in this wretched scrawl. Give my love to the Miss Taylors, when you see them. Farewell my *dear*, *dear*, *dear* Ellen.

Letter 6

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *September 5th*, 1832.

DEAREST ELLEN,—I am really very much indebted to you for your well-filled and interesting letter; it forms a striking contrast to my brief, meagre epistles, but I know you will excuse the utter dearth of news visible in them when you consider the situation in which I am placed, quite out of the reach of all intelligence except what I obtain through the medium of the newspapers, and I believe you would not find much to interest you in a political discussion or a summary of the accidents of the week. Papa was sorry to hear that his old friend Mr. Roberson has suffered from an attack of paralysis; I should think his age precludes all hope of his ultimate recovery. It gave me pleasure to learn that you take lessons at Roe Head once a week, as I have no doubt your improvement will be rapid in those two important branches of education. Your account of Miss Martha Taylor's fit of good behaviour amused me exceedingly; I only hope it may be permanent. *En passant*, is Polly yet in the land of the living? If she is, I wish you would tell her the first time you have an opportunity that I should be glad to receive a letter from her. I am sorry, *very* sorry that Miss H. has turned out to be so different from what you thought her, but, my dearest Ellen, you must never expect perfection in this world, and I know your naturally confiding and affectionate disposition had led you to imagine that Miss H. was almost faultless. I now come to the latter part of your letter; I feel greatly obliged to

your mother and yourself for the very kind invitation therein contained. When I consulted Papa and Aunt about it, they both said they could not possibly have any objection to my accepting it. It is therefore with great pleasure that I am enabled to return an affirmative to your kind and pressing request. I think, dearest Ellen, our friendship is destined to form an exception to the general rule regarding school friendships. At least I know that absence has not in the least abated the sisterly affection which I feel toward you. Remember me to your mother and sisters, and accept every profession of genuine regard which the English tongue affords, from your friend, CHARLOTTE BRONTË.

P.S.—Do not criticise the execrable penmanship visible in this letter. *Adieu pour le présent.*

And so in this same month of September 1832 we find Charlotte Brontë paying her first visit to her school-fellow at Rydings, a handsome house near Birstall, standing in many acres of ground. The house has battlements, a rookery, and all that a country gentleman's seat might aspire to. It shares with Norton Conyers near Ripon the credit of having inspired the picture of 'Thornfield Hall' in *Jane Eyre*.

The latter house may at any time have been seen by Charlotte Brontë, as she was governess in a family that once rented the place. It has further the advantage of a story of a mad woman being associated with it, besides corresponding with Thornfield in many important details. That Rydings played some part in her word-picture is not, however, to be doubted, and she had much more intimate associations with this smaller house.[1]

Rydings at this time was the property of an uncle of Ellen Nussey's—Reuben Walker, a distinguished court physician. The family in that generation and in this has given many of its members to high public service in various professions—one in our own generation has served many years in Parliament. Two Nusseys, and two

[1] The subject is discussed at length in *The Literary Shrines of Yorkshire*, by J. A. Erskine Stuart. Longmans, 1892.

Walkers, were court physicians in their day. When Earl Fitzwilliam was canvassing for the county in 1809, he was a guest at Rydings for two weeks, and on his election was chaired by the tenantry. Reuben Walker, this uncle of Miss Nussey's, was the only Justice of the Peace for the district which included Leeds, Bradford, Huddersfield, and Halifax, during the Luddite riots—a significant reminder of the growth of population since that day. Ellen Nussey's home was at Rydings, then tenanted by her brother John, until 1837, and she then removed to Brookroyd, where she lived until long after Charlotte Brontë died.

Charlotte travelled from Haworth to Rydings in a two-wheeled gig, the only conveyance to be had in Haworth, except the covered cart that brought her to school. Branwell accompanied his sister. He was then a red-haired boy of fifteen, full of enthusiasm, and told Charlotte that he 'was leaving her in Paradise.'[1] The visit passed, says Miss Nussey, 'without much to mark it except that we crept away together from household life as much as we could. Charlotte liked to pace the plantations or seek seclusion in the fruit-garden; she was safe from visitors in these retreats. She was so painfully shy, she could not bear any special notice. One day, on being led in to dinner by a stranger, she trembled and nearly burst into tears.'

One of the good resolutions of the continuation of friendship evoked by this visit seems to have been a desire on the part of Charlotte to improve her facility in French through correspondence in that language. Hence the next letter announcing her safe arrival at home. The letter is full of errors in punctuation, and even in spelling. Herein it offers an interesting contrast to that proficiency that she was to attain to at a later date.

[1] Ellen Nussey in *Scribner's Magazine*, vol. ii. 1871.

Letter 7

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

A HAWORTH, *le* 18 *Octobre*, 1832.

MA TRÈS CHÈRE AMIE,—Nous sommes encore partu et il y a entre nous dix sept milles de chemin ; le bref quinzaine pendant lequel je fus chez vous c'est envolè et desormais il faut compter ma visite agreable parmi le nombre de choses passées. J'arrivait a Haworth en parfaite sauveté sans le moindre accident ou malheur. Mes petites soeurs couraient hors de la maison pour me rencontrer aussitôt que la voiture se fit voir, et elles m'embrassaient avec autant d'empressement et de plaisir comme si j'avais été absente pour plus d'un an. Mon Papa ma Tante, et le Monsieur dont mon frère avait parlé, furent tous assembles dans le salon, et en peu de temps je m'y rendis aussi. C'est souvent l'ordre du Ciel que quand on a perdu un plaisir il y en a un autre prêt a prendre sa place. Ainsi je venois de partir de très chèrs amis, mais tout a l'heure je revins à des parens aussi chers et bons dans le moment. Même que vous me perdiez (ose-je croire que mon depart vous était un chagrin?) vous attendites l'arrivée de votre frere, et de votre soeur. J'ai donné a mes soeurs les pommes que vous leur envoyiez avec tant de bonté : elles disent qu'elles sont sûr que Mademoiselle Nussey est trés aimable et bonne : l'une et l'autre sont extremement impatientes de vous voir : j'espére que dans peu de mois elles auront ce plaisir. Je n'ai plus de temps et pour le présent il faut conclure. Donnez mes plus sincéres amitiés a Mademoiselle Mercy et maintenant ma bien aimee, ma précieuse Ellen mon amie chere, Croyez-moi de rester a vous pour la vie, CHARLOTTE.

P.S.—You cannot imagine in what haste I have written this. If you do not like me to write French letters tell me so, and I will desist, but I beg and implore your reply may be in the universal language, never mind a few mistakes at first, the attempt will contribute greatly to your improvement. Farewell. Write soon, very soon ; I shall be all impatience till I hear from you.

Letter 8

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *January 1st*, 1833.

DEAR ELLEN,—I believe we agreed to correspond once a month; that space of time has now elapsed since I received your last interesting letter, and I now therefore hasten to reply. Accept my congratulations on the arrival of the 'New Year,' every succeeding day of which will, I trust, find you wiser and better in the true sense of those much-used words. The first day of January always presents to my mind a train of very solemn and important reflections, and a question more easily asked than answered, frequently occurs, viz.: How have I improved the past year, and with what good intentions do I view the dawn of its successor? These, my dearest Ellen, are weighty considerations which (young as we are) neither you nor I can too deeply or too seriously ponder. I am sorry your two great diffidences, arising, I think, from the want of sufficient confidence in your own capabilities, prevented you from writing to me in French, as I think the attempt would have materially contributed to your improvement in that language. You very kindly caution me against being tempted by the fondness of my sisters to consider myself of too much importance, and then in a parenthesis you beg me not to be offended. O! Ellen, do you think I could be offended by any good advice you may give me? No, I thank you heartily, and love you, if possible, better for it. I had a letter about a fortnight ago from Miss Taylor, in which she mentions the birth of Mrs. Clapham's little boy, and likewise tells me you had not been at Roe Head for upwards of a month, but does not assign any reason for your absence. I hope it does not arise from ill-health. I am glad you like *Kenilworth*; it is certainly a splendid production, more resembling a Romance than a Novel, and in my opinion one of the most interesting works that ever emanated from the great Sir Walter's pen. I was exceedingly amused at the characteristic and naïve manner in which you expressed your detestation of Varney's character, so much so, indeed, that I could not forbear laughing aloud when I perused that part of your letter; he is certainly the personification of consummate villainy, and in the delineation of his dark and profoundly artful mind, Scott exhibits a wonderful knowledge of human nature, as well as surprising

skill in embodying his perceptions so as to enable others to become participators in that knowledge. Excuse the want of *news* in this very barren epistle, for I really have none to communicate. Emily and Anne beg to be kindly remembered to you. Give my best love to your mother and sisters, and as it is very late permit me to conclude with the assurance of my unchanged, unchanging, and unchangeable affection for you.—Adieu, my sweetest Ellen; I am, ever yours, CHARLOTTE.

Letter 9

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *June 20th*, 1833.

DEAR ELLEN,—I know you will be very angry because I have not written sooner; my reason, or rather my motive for this apparent neglect was, that I had determined not to write until I could ask you to pay us your long-promised visit. Aunt thought it would be better to defer it till about the middle of summer, as the winter and even the spring seasons are remarkably cold and bleak among our mountains. Papa now desires me to present his respects to Mrs. Nussey, and say that he would feel greatly obliged if she would allow us the pleasure of your company for a few weeks at Haworth. I will leave it to you to fix whatever day may be most convenient, but, dear Ellen, let it be an *early* one. I received a letter from Poll Taylor yesterday; she was in high dudgeon at my inattention at not promptly answering her last epistle. I, however, sat down immediately and wrote a very humble reply, candidly confessing my faults and soliciting forgiveness. I hope it has proved successful. Have you suffered much from that troublesome though not (I am happy to hear) generally fatal disease, the Influenza? We have so far steered clear of it, but I know not how long we may continue to escape. Miss Taylor tells me that H. H. has been elevated to the office of housekeeper at Colne Bridge; doubtless she will fulfil its duties with great self-complacency. Do you not think Mrs. Bradbury has made excellent choice of a partner for life? Your last letter revealed a state of mind which seemed to promise much. As I read it I could not help wishing that my own feelings more nearly resembled yours; but unhappily all the good thoughts which enter *my mind* evaporate almost before I have had time to ascer-

tain their existence; every right resolution which I form is so transient, so fragile, and so easily broken, that I sometimes fear I shall never be what I ought; earnestly hoping that this may not be your case, that you may continue steadfast till the end,—I remain, dearest Ellen, your ever faithful friend.

CHARLOTTE BRONTË.

P.S.—Write soon and let the answer be favourable.

Ellen Nussey's promised visit was paid this summer, and her description of it is interesting:—

Ellen Nussey's Reminiscences.

My first visit to Haworth was full of novelty and freshness. The scenery for some miles before we reached Haworth was wild and uncultivated, with hardly any population; at last we came to what seemed a terrific hill, such a deep declivity no one thought of riding down it; the horse had to be carefully led. We no sooner reached the foot of this hill than we had to begin to mount again, over a narrow, rough, stone-paved road; the horse's feet seemed to catch at the boulders as if climbing. When we reached the top of the village there was apparently no outlet, but we were directed to drive into an entry which just admitted the gig; we wound round in this entry and then saw the church close at hand, and we entered on the short lane which led to the parsonage gateway. Here Charlotte was waiting, having caught the sound of the approaching gig. When greetings and introductions were over, Miss Branwell (the aunt of the Brontës) took possession of their guest and treated her with the care and solicitude due to a weary traveller. Mr. Brontë, also, was stirred out of his usual retirement by his own kind consideration, for not only the guest but the man-servant and the horse were to be made comfortable. He made inquiries about the man, of his length of service, etc., with the kind purpose of making a few moments of conversation agreeable to him.

Even at this time, Mr. Brontë struck me as looking very venerable, with his snow-white hair and powdered coat-collar. His manner and mode of speech always had the tone of high-bred courtesy. He was considered somewhat of an invalid, and always lived in the most abstemious and simple manner. His white cravat was not then so remarkable as it grew to be afterwards. He was in the habit of covering this cravat himself. We never

saw the operation, but we always had to wind for him the white sewing-silk which he used. Charlotte said it was her father's one extravagance—he cut up yards and yards of white lute-string (silk) in covering his cravat; and, like Dr. Joseph Woolffe (the renowned and learned traveller), who, when on a visit and in a long fit of absence, 'went into a clean shirt every day for a week, without taking one off,' so Mr. Brontë's cravat went into new silk and new size without taking any off, till at length nearly half his head was enveloped in cravat. His liability to bronchial attacks, no doubt, attached him to this increasing growth of cravat.

Miss Branwell, their aunt, was a small, antiquated little lady. She wore caps large enough for half a dozen of the present fashion, and a front of light auburn curls over her forehead. She always dressed in silk. She had a horror of the climate so far north, and of the stone floors of the parsonage. She amused us by clicking about in pattens whenever she had to go into the kitchen or look after household operations.

She talked a great deal of her younger days; the gaieties of her native town, Penzance, in Cornwall; the soft, warm climate etc. The social life of her younger days she used to recall with regret; she gave one the idea that she had been a belle among her own home acquaintances. She took snuff out of a very pretty gold snuff-box, which she sometimes presented to you with a little laugh, as if she enjoyed the slight shock and astonishment visible in your countenance. In summer she spent part of the afternoon in reading aloud to Mr. Brontë. In the winter evenings she must have enjoyed this; for she and Mr. Brontë had often to finish their discussions on what she had read when we all met for tea. She would be very lively and intelligent, and tilt arguments against Mr. Brontë without fear.

'Tabby,' the faithful, trustworthy old servant, was very quaint in appearance—very active, and, in these days, the general servant and factotum. We were all 'childer' and 'bairns,' in her estimation. She still kept to her duty of walking out with the 'childer' if they went any distance from home, unless Branwell were sent by his father as a protector. Poor 'Tabby' in later days, after she had been attacked with paralysis, would most anxiously look out for such duties as she was still capable of. The postman was her special point of attention. She did not approve of the inspection which the younger eyes of her fellow-servant bestowed on his deliveries. She jealously seized them when she could, and

carried them off with hobbling step, and shaking head and hand, to the safe custody of Charlotte.

Emily Brontë had by this time acquired a lithesome, graceful figure. She was the tallest person in the house, except her father. Her hair, which was naturally as beautiful as Charlotte's, was in the same unbecoming tight curl and frizz, and there was the same want of complexion. She had very beautiful eyes—kind, kindling, liquid eyes; but she did not often look at you: she was too reserved. Their colour might be said to be dark grey, at other times dark blue, they varied so. She talked very little. She and Anne were like twins—inseparable companions, and in the very closest sympathy, which never had any interruption.

Anne—dear, gentle Anne—was quite different in appearance from the others. She was her aunt's favourite. Her hair was a very pretty light brown, and fell on her neck in graceful curls. She had lovely violet-blue eyes, fine pencilled eyebrows, and clear, almost transparent complexion. She still pursued her studies, and especially her sewing, under the surveillance of her aunt. Emily had now begun to have the disposal of her own time.

Branwell studied regularly with his father, and used to paint in oils, which was regarded as study for what might be eventually his profession. All the household entertained the idea of his becoming an artist, and hoped he would be a distinguished one.

In fine and suitable weather delightful rambles were made over the moors, and down into glens and ravines that here and there broke the monotony of the moorland. The rugged bank and rippling brook were treasures of delight. Emily, Anne, and Branwell used to ford the streams, and sometimes placed stepping-stones for the other two; there was always a lingering delight in these sports—every moss, every flower, every tint and form, were noted and enjoyed. Emily especially had a gleesome delight in these nooks of beauty—her reserve for the time vanished. One long ramble made in these early days was far away over the moors, to a spot familiar to Emily and Anne, which they called 'The Meeting of the Waters.' It was a small oasis of emerald green turf, broken here and there by small clear springs; a few large stones served as resting-places; seated here, we were hidden from all the world, nothing appearing in view but miles and miles of heather, a glorious blue sky, and brightening sun. A fresh breeze wafted on us its exhilarating influence; we laughed and made mirth of each other, and settled we would call

ourselves the quartette. Emily, half reclining on a slab of stone, played like a young child with the tadpoles in the water, making them swim about, and then fell to moralising on the strong and the weak, the brave and the cowardly, as she chased them with her hand. No serious care or sorrow had so far cast its gloom on nature's youth and buoyancy, and nature's simplest offerings were fountains of pleasure and enjoyment.

The interior of the now far-famed parsonage lacked drapery of all kinds. Mr. Brontë's horror of fire forbade curtains to the windows; they never had these accessories to comfort and appearance till long after Charlotte was the only inmate of the family sitting-room,—she then ventured on the innovation when her friend was with her; it did not please her father, but it was not forbidden.

There was not much carpet anywhere except in the sitting-room, and on the study floor. The hall floor and stairs were done with sandstone, always beautifully clean, as everything was about the house; the walls were not papered, but stained in a pretty dove-coloured tint; hair-seated chairs and mahogany tables, book-shelves in the study, but not many of these elsewhere. Scant and bare indeed, many will say, yet it was not a scantness that made itself felt. Mind and thought, I had almost said elegance, but certainly refinement, diffused themselves over all, and made nothing really wanting.

A little later on there was the addition of a piano. Emily, after some application, played with precision and brilliancy. Anne played also, but she preferred soft harmonies and vocal music. She sang a little; her voice was weak, but very sweet in tone.

Mr. Brontë's health caused him to retire early. He assembled his household for family worship at eight o'clock; at nine he locked and barred the front door, always giving, as he passed the sitting-room door, a kindly admonition to the 'children' not to be late; half-way up the stairs he stayed his steps to wind up the clock.

Every morning was heard the firing of a pistol from Mr. Brontë's room window; it was the discharging of the loading which was made every night. Mr. Brontë's tastes led him to delight in the perusal of battle-scenes, and in following the artifice of war; had he entered on military service instead of ecclesiastical, he would probably have had a very distinguished career. The self-denials and privations of camp-life would have agreed entirely with his

nature, for he was remarkably independent of the luxuries and comforts of life. The only dread he had was of fire, and this dread was so intense it caused him to prohibit all but silk or woollen dresses for his daughters; indeed, for any one to wear any other kind of fabric was almost to forfeit his respect.

Mr. Brontë at times would relate strange stories, which had been told to him by some of the oldest inhabitants of the parish, of the extraordinary lives and doings of people who had resided in far-off, out-of-the-way places, but in contiguity with Haworth—stories which made one shiver and shrink from hearing; but they were full of grim humour and interest to Mr. Brontë and his children, as revealing the characteristics of a class in the human race, and as such Emily Brontë has stereotyped them in her *Wuthering Heights.*

During Miss Branwell's reign at the parsonage, the love of animals had to be kept in due subjection. There was then but one dog, which was admitted to the parlour at stated times. Emily and Anne always gave him a portion of their breakfast, which was, by their own choice, the old north country diet of oatmeal porridge. Later on, there were three household pets—the tawny, strong-limbed 'Keeper,' Emily's favourite: he was so completely under her control, she could quite easily make him spring and roar like a lion. She taught him this kind of occasional play without any coercion. 'Flossy'—long, silky-haired, black and white 'Flossy'—was Anne's favourite; and black 'Tom,' the tabby, was everybody's favourite. It received such gentle treatment it seemed to have lost cat's nature, and subsided into luxurious amiability and contentment. The Brontës' love of dumb creatures made them very sensitive of the treatment bestowed upon them. For any one to offend in this respect was with them an infallible bad sign, and a blot on the disposition.

The services in church in these days were such as can only be seen (if ever seen again) in localities like Haworth. The people assembled, but it was apparently to listen. Any part beyond that was quite out of their reckoning. All through the prayers, a stolid look of apathy was fixed on the generality of their faces. There they sat, or leaned, in their pews; some few, perhaps, were resting, after a long walk over the moors. The children, many of them in clogs (or sabots), pattered in from the school after service had commenced, and pattered out again before the ser-

mon. The sexton, with a long staff, continually walked round in the aisles, 'knobbing' sleepers where he dare, shaking his head at and threatening unruly children; but when the sermon began there was a change. Attitudes took the listening forms, eyes were turned on the preacher. It was curious, now, to note the expression. A rustic, untaught intelligence gleamed in their faces; in some, a daring, doubting, questioning look, as if they would like to offer some defiant objection. Mr. Brontë always addressed his hearers in extempore style. Very often he selected a parable from one of the Gospels, which he explained in the simplest manner—sometimes going over his own words and explaining them also, so as to be perfectly intelligible to the lowest comprehension.

Letter 10

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *September 11th*, 1833.

DEAR ELLEN,—I have hitherto delayed answering your last letter because from what you said I imagined you might be from home. Since you were here Emily has been very ill; her ailment was Erysipelas in the arm, accompanied by severe bilious attacks, and great general debility. Her arm was obliged to be cut in order to relieve it; it is now, I am happy to say, nearly healed, her health is, in fact, almost perfectly re-established; the sickness still continues to recur at intervals. Were I to tell you of the impression you have made on every one here, you would accuse me of flattery. Papa and Aunt are continually adducing you as an example for me to shape my actions and behaviour by. Emily and Anne say 'they never saw any one they liked so well as Miss Nussey,' and Tabby talks a great deal more nonsense about you than I choose to report. You must read this letter, dear Ellen, without thinking of the writing, for I have indited it almost all in the twilight. It is now so dark, that notwithstanding the singular property of 'seeing in the night-time,' which the young ladies at Roe Head used to attribute to me, I can scribble no longer. All the family unite with me in wishes for your welfare. Remember me respectfully to your mother and sisters, and supply all those expressions of warm and genuine regard which the increasing darkness will not permit me to insert.

CHARLOTTE BRONTË.

Letter 11

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *February 11th*, 1834.

DEAR ELLEN,—My letters are scarcely worth the postage, and therefore I have, till now, delayed answering your last communication; but upwards of two months having elapsed since I received it, I have at length determined to take up my pen in reply lest your anger should be roused by my apparent negligence. It grieved me extremely to hear of your precarious state of health. I trust sincerely that your medical adviser is mistaken in supposing you have any tendency to a pulmonary affection. Dear Ellen, that would indeed be a calamity. I have seen enough of consumption to dread it as one of the most insidious and fatal diseases incident to humanity. But I repeat it, I *hope*, nay *pray*, that your alarm is groundless. If you remember, I used frequently to tell you at school that you were constitutionally nervous—guard against the gloomy impressions which such a state of mind naturally produces. Take constant and regular exercise, and all, I doubt not, will yet be well. What a remarkable winter we have had! Rain and wind continually, but an almost total absence of frost and snow. Has *general* ill-health been the consequence of wet weather at Birstall or not? With us an unusual number of deaths have lately taken place. According to custom I have no news to communicate, indeed I do not write either to retail gossip or to impart solid information; my motives for maintaining our mutual correspondence are, in the first place, to get intelligence from you, and in the second that we may remind each other of our separate existences; without some such medium of reciprocal converse, according to the nature of things, *you*, who are surrounded by society and friends, would soon forget that such an insignificant being as myself ever lived. *I*, however, in the solitude of our wild little hill village, think of my only unrelated friend, my dear ci-devant school companion daily—nay, almost hourly. Now Ellen, don't you think I have very cleverly contrived to make up a letter out of nothing? Good-bye, dearest. That God may bless you is the earnest prayer of your ever faithful friend, CHARLOTTE BRONTË.

P.S.—Write to me *very* soon.

Letter 12

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *February 20th*, 1834.

DEAREST ELLEN,—Your letter gave me real and heartfelt pleasure, mingled with no small degree of astonishment. Mary previously informed me of your departure for London, and I had not ventured to calculate on receiving any communication from you while surrounded by the splendours and novelties of that great city, which has been called the mercantile metropolis of Europe. Judging from human nature, I thought that a little country girl, placed for the first time in a situation so well calculated to excite curiosity, and to distract attention, would lose all remembrance, for a time at least, of distant and familiar objects, and give herself up entirely to the fascination of those scenes which were then presented to her view. Your kind, interesting, and most welcome epistle showed me, however, that I had been both mistaken and uncharitable in my supposition. I was greatly amused at the tone of nonchalance which you assumed while treating of London, and its wonders, which seem to have excited anything rather than surprise in your mind; did you not feel awed while gazing at St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey? Had you no feeling of ardent and intense interest, when in St. James' you saw the Palace where so many of England's kings have held their court, and beheld the representations of their persons on the walls? The magnificence of London has drawn exclamations of astonishment from travelled men, experienced in the world, its wonders and beauties. Have you yet seen any of the great personages whom the sitting of Parliament now detains in London? The Duke of Wellington, Sir Robert Peel, Earl de Grey, Mr. Stanley, Mr. O'Connell, etc. If I were you, Ellen, I would not be anxious to spend my time in reading while in town. Make use of your own eyes for the purpose of observation, now and for a time at least lay aside the spectacles with which authors would furnish us in their works. It gives me more pleasure than I can express to hear of your renewed health. About a week before I received yours I had written to you, supposing you to be still at Birstall; fearing that letter may be sent in mistake for the present one, I have hastened to return an answer with as little delay as possible. I shall be quite impatient, dear Ellen, till I receive

another letter from you. Pray continue to remember me. Give my love to your sisters, and accept the kindest wishes from your affectionate friend, C. BRONTË.

P.S.—Will you be kind enough to inform me of the number of performers in the King's Military Band? Branwell wishes for this information.

Letter 13

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *June* 19*th*, 1834.

MY *OWN* DEAR ELLEN,—I may rightfully and truly call you so *now* you *have* returned, or are returning from London, from the great city which to me is almost apocryphal as Babylon or Nineveh, or ancient Rome. You are withdrawing from the world (as it is called) and bringing with you, if your letters enable me to form a correct judgment, a heart as unsophisticated, as natural, as true, as that you carried there. I am slow, *very* slow to believe the protestations of another. I know my own sentiments because I can read my own mind, but the minds of the rest of men and women kind are to me as sealed volumes, hieroglyphical, which I cannot easily either unseal or decipher. Yet time, careful study, long acquaintance, overcome most difficulties; and in your case I think they have succeeded well in bringing to light and construing that hidden language, whose turnings, windings, inconsistencies, and obscurities, so frequently baffle the researches of the honest observer of human nature. How many after having, as they thought, discovered the word friend in the mental volume, have afterwards found they should have read *false* friend! I have long seen 'friend' in your mind, in your words, in your actions, but *now* distinctly visible, and clearly written in characters that cannot be distrusted, I discern *true* friend! I am really grateful for your mindfulness of so obscure a person as myself, and I hope the pleasure is not altogether selfish; I trust it is partly derived from the consciousness that my friend's character is of a higher, a more steadfast order than I was once perfectly aware of. Few girls would have done as you have done—would have beheld the glare and glitter and dazzling display of London, with dispositions so unchanged, hearts so uncontaminated. I see no affectation in your letter, no trifling, no frivolous contempt of plain, and weak admira-

tion of showy persons and things. I do not say this in flattery —but in genuine sincerity. Put such an one as A. W. in the same situation, and mark what a mighty difference there would be in the result! I say no more; remember me kindly to your excellent sisters, accept the good wishes of my Papa, Aunt, Sisters, and Brother, and continue to spare a corner of your warm, affectionate heart for your *true* and *grateful* friend,

CHARLOTTE BRONTË.

Letter 14

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *July 4th*, 1834.

DEAR ELLEN,—You will be tired of paying the postage of my letters, but necessity must plead my excuse for their frequent recurrence. I *must* thank you for your very handsome present. The bonnet is pretty, neat, and simple, as like the giver as possible; it brought Ellen Nussey, with her fair quiet face, brown eyes, and dark hair, full to my remembrance. I wish I could find some other way to thank you for your kindness than words. The load of obligation under which you lay me is positively overwhelming, and I make no return. In your last you tell me to tell you of your faults and cease flattering you. Now, really, Ellen, how can you be so foolish! I won't tell you of your faults, because I don't know them. What a creature would that be, who, after receiving an affectionate and kind letter from a beloved friend, should sit down and write a catalogue of defects by way of answer! Imagine me doing so, and then consider what epithets you would bestow upon me—conceited, dogmatical, hypocritical, little humbug, I should think would be the mildest. Why, child! I've neither time nor inclination to reflect on your faults when you are so far from me, and when, besides kind letters and presents, and so forth, you are continually bringing forth your goodness in the most prominent light. Then, too, there are friends always round you who can much better discharge that unpleasant office. I have no doubt their advice is completely at your service; why then should I intrude mine? Let us have no more nonsense about flattery, Ellen, if you love me. Mr. R. Nussey is going to be married, is he? Well. his wife elect

appeared to me a clever and amiable lady, as far as I could judge from the little I saw of her, and from your account. Now to this flattering sentence must I tack on a list of her faults? You say it is in contemplation for you to leave Rydings; I am sorry for it. Rydings is a pleasant spot, one of the old family halls of England surrounded by lawn and woodland, speaking of past times, and suggesting to me, at least, happy feelings, it would be smooth and easy; but it is the living in other people's houses, the estrangement from one's real character, the adoption of a cold, frigid, apathetic exterior, that is painful.

Martha Taylor thought you grown less, did she? That's like Martha. I am not grown a bit, but as short and dumpy as ever. I wrote to Mary, but have as yet received no answer. You ask me to recommend some books for your perusal. I will do so in as few words as I can. If you like poetry let it be first-rate; Milton, Shakespeare, Thomson, Goldsmith, Pope (if you will, though I don't admire him), Scott, Byron, Campbell, Wordsworth, and Southey. Now don't be startled at the names of Shakespeare and Byron. Both these were great men, and their works are like themselves. You know how to choose the good and avoid the evil; the finest passages are always the purest, the bad are invariably revolting; you will never wish to read them over twice. Omit the comedies of Shakespeare and the *Don Juan*, perhaps the *Cain* of Byron, though the latter is a magnificent poem, and read the rest fearlessly; that must indeed be a depraved mind which can gather evil from *Henry VIII.*, *Richard III.*, from *Macbeth*, and *Hamlet*, and *Julius Cæsar*. Scott's sweet, wild, romantic poetry can do you no harm. Nor can Wordsworth's, nor Campbell's, nor Southey's—the greatest part at least of his; some is certainly objectionable. For history, read Hume, Rollin, and the *Universal History*, if you *can*: I never did. For fiction, read Scott alone; all novels after his are worthless. For biography, read Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, Southey's *Life of Nelson*, Lockhart's *Life of Burns*, Moore's *Life of Sheridan*, Moore's *Life of Byron*, Wolfe's *Remains*. For natural history, read Bewick, and Audubon, and Goldsmith, and White's *History of Selborne*. For divinity your brother Henry will advise you there. I can only say adhere to standard authors, and avoid novelty. If you can read this scrawl it will be to the credit of your patience. With love to your sisters, believe me to be, for ever yours, CHARLOTTE BRONTË.

Letter 15

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *November* 10*th*, 1834.

DEAR ELLEN,—I have been a long while, a very long while without writing to you. A letter I received from Mary Taylor this morning reminded me of my neglect, and made me instantly sit down to atone for it, if possible. She tells me your Aunt Nussey, of Brookroyd, is dead, and that poor Sarah is very ill; for this I am truly sorry, but I hope her case is not yet without hope. You should however remember that death, should it happen, will undoubtedly be great gain to her. Can you give me any particulars respecting the failure of Huliby, Brooke & Co.? I am thus particular in my inquiries, because papa is anxious to hear the details of a matter so seriously affecting his old friends at Dewsbury, and because I cannot myself help feeling interested in a misfortune, which must fall heavily on some of my late school-fellows. Poor Leah and Maria Brooke! In your last, dear Ellen, you ask my opinion respecting the amusement of dancing, and whether I thought it objectionable when indulged in for an hour or two in parties of boys and girls. I should hesitate to express a difference of opinion from Mr. Allbut, or from your excellent sister, but really the matter seems to me to stand thus: It is allowed on all hands that the sin of dancing consists not in the mere action of shaking the shanks (as the Scotch say), but in the consequences that usually attend it—namely, frivolity and waste of time; when it is used only, as in the case you state, for the exercise and amusement of an hour among people (who surely may without any breach of God's commandments be allowed a little light-heartedness), these consequences cannot follow. Ergo (according to my manner of arguing), the amusement is at such times perfectly innocent. Having nothing more to say, I will conclude with the expression of my sincere and earnest attachment for, Ellen, your own dear self.

CHARLOTTE BRONTË.

Pray write soon; forgive mistakes, erasures, bad writing, etc. Farewell.

Letter 16

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *January 12th*, 1835.

DEAREST ELLEN,—I thought it better not to answer your very kind letter too soon, lest I should (in the present fully occupied state of your time) appear intrusive. I am happy to inform you papa has given me permission to accept the invitation it conveyed, and ere long I hope once more to have the pleasure of seeing *almost* the *only* and certainly the *dearest* friend I possess (out of our own family). I leave it to you to fix the time, only requesting you not to appoint too early a day; let it be a fortnight or three weeks at least from the date of the present letter. I am greatly obliged to you for your kind offer of meeting me at Bradford, but papa thinks that such a plan would involve uncertainty, and be productive of trouble to you. He recommends that I should go direct in a gig from Haworth at the time you shall determine, or, if that day should prove unfavourable, the first subsequent fine one. Such an arrangement would leave us both free, and if it meets with your approbation would perhaps be the best we could finally resolve upon. Excuse the brevity of this epistle, dear Ellen, for I am in a great hurry, and we shall, I trust, soon see each other face to face, which will be better than a hundred letters. Give my respectful love to your mother and sisters, accept the kind remembrances of all our family, and—Believe me in particular to be, your firm and faithful friend,

CHARLOTTE BRONTË.

P.S.—You ask me to stay a month when I come, but as I do not wish to tire you with my company, and as, besides, papa and aunt both think a fortnight amply sufficient, I shall not exceed that period. Farewell, *dearest*, *dearest*.

Letter 17

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *March 13th*, 1835.

DEAR ELLEN,—I suppose by this time you will be expecting to hear from me. You did not fix any precise period when I

should write, so I hope you will not be very angry on the score of delay, etc. Well, here I am, as completely separated from you as if a hundred instead of seventeen miles intervened between us. I can neither hear you, nor see you, nor feel you, you are become a mere thought, an unsubstantial impression on the memory which, however, is happily incapable of erasure. My journey home was rather melancholy, and would have been very much so, but for the presence and conversation of my worthy companion. I found K. a very intelligent man and really not unlike Cato (you will understand the allusion). He told me the adventures of his sailor's life, his shipwreck, and the hurricane he had witnessed in the West Indies, with a much better flow of language than many of far greater pretensions are masters of. I thought he appeared a little dismayed by the wildness of the country round Haworth, and I imagine he has carried back a pretty report of it. He was very inquisitive, and asked several questions respecting the names of places, directions of roads, etc., which I could not answer. I fa y he thought me very stupid.

What do you think of the course Politics are taking? I make this inquiry because I now think you have a wholesome interest in the matter; formerly you did not care greatly about it. Brougham you see is triumphant. Wretch! I am a hearty hater, and if there is any one I thoroughly abhor, it is that man. But the opposition is divided, red hots, and luke warms; and the Duke (par excellence *the* Duke) and Sir Robert Peel show no sign of insecurity, though they have already been twice beat(en); so 'courage, mon amie.' Heaven defend the right! as the old chevaliers used to say, before they joined battle. Now Ellen, laugh heartily at all this rodomontade, but you have brought it on yourself; don't you remember telling me to write such letters to you as I write to Mary Taylor? Here's a specimen; hereafter should follow a long disquisition on books, but I'll spare you that. Give my sincerest love to your mother and sisters. Every soul in this house unites with me in best wishes to yourself.—I am, dear Ellen, thy friend, CHARLOTTE.

P.S.—Did Kelly request you to send the umbrella I left to the Bull's Head Inn, Bradford? Our carrier called for it on Thursday, but it was not there. Happily it was of no great value, so it does not much signify.

Letter 18

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *May 8th*, 1835.

DEAREST ELLEN,—Judging by the date of your letter previously, one month and four days intervened between the period in which it was written and that which brought it to my hands. I received it last Monday, and till that time it continued to lie snugly enclosed in the umbrella at the Bull's Head Inn at Bradford, our carrier having neglected to inquire for it. Poor Mr. Buckmaster, who was only ill when you wrote, is now dead and buried. He had a troubled sojourn in Dewsbury, but undoubtedly he has now found rest in Heaven. Mr. T. Allbut, according to the papers, has succeeded him. Will Miss Marianne Wooler change her name soon? I should suppose all cause of delay is now removed. The Election! The Election! That cry has rung even amongst our lonely hills like the blast of a trumpet; how has it roused the populous neighbourhood of Birstall? Under what banner have your brothers ranged themselves? The Blue or the Yellow? Use your influence with them, entreat them, if it be necessary, on your knees to stand by their *country* and religion in this day of danger. Oh! I wish the whole West Riding of our noble Yorkshire would feel the necessity of exertion. Oh, how I wish Stuart Wortley, the son of the most patriotic Patrician Yorkshire owns, would be elected the representative of his native Province; Lord Morpeth was at Haworth last week, and I saw him. My opinion of his Lordship is recorded in a letter I wrote yesterday to Mary Taylor; it is not worth writing over again, so I will not trouble you with it here. Give my regards, tender and true, to your sister Mercy. Surely Mr. Harrison is not going to leave for ever. Believe me, my own *dear* Ellen, that I remain, yours with true affection,

CHARLOTTE BRONTË.

P.S.—Aunt and my sisters beg their kind love to you.

Letter 19

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *July 6th*, 1835.

DEAREST ELLEN,—I had hoped to have had the extreme pleasure of seeing you at Haworth this summer, but human affairs are

mutable, and human resolutions must bend to the course of events. We are all about to divide, break up, separate. Emily is going to school, Branwell is going to London, and I am going to be a governess. This last determination I formed myself, knowing I should have to take the step sometime, and 'better sune as syne,' to use the Scotch proverb; and knowing well that papa would have enough to do with his limited income, should Branwell be placed at the Royal Academy, and Emily at Roe Head. Where am I going to reside? you will ask. Within four miles of yourself, dearest, at a place neither of us is unacquainted with, being no other than the identical Roe Head mentioned above. Yes, I am going to teach in the very school where I was myself taught. Miss Wooler made me the offer, and I preferred it to one or two proposals of private governess-ship, which I had before received. I am sad—very sad—at the thought of leaving home; but duty—necessity—these are stern mistresses, who will not be disobeyed. Did I not once say, Ellen—you ought to be thankful for your independence? I felt what I said at the time, and I repeat it now with double earnestness; if anything would cheer me, it is the idea of being so near you. Surely you and Polly will come and see me; it would be wrong in me to doubt it; you were never unkind yet. Emily and I leave home on the 29th of this month; the idea of being together consoles us both somewhat, and, in truth, since I must enter a situation, 'My lines have fallen in pleasant places.' I both love and respect Miss Wooler. What did you mean, Ellen, by saying that you knew the reason why I wished to have a letter from your sister Mercy? The sentence hurt me, though I did not quite understand it. My only reason was a desire to correspond with a person I have a regard for. Give my love both to her and to Sarah, and Miss Nussey.

Remember me respectfully to Mrs. Nussey, and believe me, my dearest friend,—Affectionately, warmly yours, C. BRONTË.

CHAPTER VII

GOVERNESS AT ROE HEAD AND DEWSBURY MOOR

A DISTINGUISHED critic, when visiting Dewsbury to address the Brontë Society,[1] complained that he could find but little to guide him as to Charlotte Brontë's association with the place. That most just complaint may be extended by the biographer to Roe Head. Many pupils who were at school at both places when Charlotte Brontë was governess here, were proud to boast of it in after life, but not one would seem to have been of the writing fraternity, and so we are thrown back entirely on Charlotte's letters for any account of those three years of but very moderate happiness, although it is clear that the headmistress, Margaret Wooler, and her sisters treated her entirely as a friend, and that her evenings at least, when free from the strain of teaching, were not disagreeably passed with these ladies. One glimpse we have from Mary Taylor, who wrote thus to Mrs. Gaskell :—[2]

Mary Taylor's Narrative.

I heard that she had gone as a teacher to Miss Wooler's. I went to see her, and asked how she could give so much for so little money, when she could live without it. She owned that, after clothing herself and Anne, there was nothing left, though she had hoped to be able to save something. She confessed it was not brilliant, but what could she do? I had nothing to answer. She seemed to have no interest or pleasure beyond the feeling of duty, and, when she

[1] 'The Challenge of the Brontës.' An Address delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Brontë Society at Dewsbury, March 28, 1903, by Edmund Gosse. Brontë Society's *Transactions*, Part XIV. Also thirty copies printed by the author for private distribution.

[2] Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, Haworth edition, pp. 140-142.

could get the opportunity, used to sit alone and 'make out.' She told me afterwards that one evening she had sat in the dressing-room until it was quite dark, and then observing it all at once had taken sudden fright.

From that time her imaginations became gloomy or frightful; she could not help it, nor help thinking. She could not forget the gloom, could not sleep at night, nor attend in the day.

She told me that one night, sitting alone, about this time, she heard a voice repeat these lines:

> 'Come, thou high and holy feeling,
> Shine o'er mountain, flit o'er wave,
> Gleam like light o'er dome and shieling.'

There were eight or ten more lines which I forget. She insisted that she had not made them, that she had heard a voice repeat them. It is possible that she had read them, and unconsciously recalled them. They are not in the volume of poems which the sisters published. She repeated a verse of Isaiah, which she said had inspired them, and which I have forgotten. Whether the lines were recollected or invented, the tale proves such habits of sedentary, monotonous solitude of thought as would have shaken a feebler mind.

Cowper's poem *The Castaway* was known to them all, and they all at times appreciated, or almost appropriated it. Charlotte told me once that Branwell had done so; and though his depression was the result of his faults, it was in no other respect different from hers. Both were not mental but physical illnesses. She was well aware of this, and would ask how that mended matters, as the feeling was there all the same, and was not removed by knowing the cause. She had a larger religious toleration than a person would have who had never questioned, and her manner of recommending religion was always that of offering comfort, not fiercely enforcing a duty. One time I mentioned that some one had asked me what religion I was of (with a view of getting me for a partisan), and that I had said that that was between God and me. Emily (who was lying on the hearthrug) exclaimed, 'That's right.' This was all I ever heard Emily say on religious subjects. Charlotte was free from religious depression when in tolerable health; when that failed, her depression returned. You have probably seen such instances. They don't get over their difficulties; they forget them when their stomach

(or whatever organ it is that inflicts such misery in sedentary people) will let them. I have heard her condemn Socinianism, Calvinism, and many other 'isms' inconsistent with Church of Englandism. I used to wonder at her acquaintance with such subjects.

But it is to the letters to her friend Ellen Nussey alone that we are able to turn for any real knowledge of this period:—

Letter 20

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

ROE HEAD, *May 10th*, 1836.

MY DEAREST ELLEN,—Just now I am not at all comfortable; for if you are thinking of me at all at this moment I know you are thinking of me as an ungrateful and indifferent being. You imagine I do not appreciate the kind, constant heart whose feelings were revealed in your last letter; but I *do*. Why then did I not answer it? you will say. Because I was waiting to receive a letter from Miss Wooler that I might know whether or not I should have time enough to give you an invitation to Haworth, before the School reopened, but Miss Wooler's letter, when it came, summoned me immediately away, and I had no time to write. Do you forgive me? I know you do; you could not persevere in anger against me long; if you would, I defy you. You seemed kindly apprehensive about my health; I am perfectly well now, and never was very ill. I was struck with the note you sent me with the umbrella; it showed a degree of interest about my concerns, which I have no right to expect from any earthly creature. I won't play the hypocrite, I won't answer your kind, gentle, friendly questions in the way you wish me to. Don't deceive yourself by imagining that I have a bit of real goodness about me. My Darling, if I were like you, I should have to face Zionward, though prejudice and error might occasionally fling a mist over the glorious vision before me, for with all your single-hearted sincerity you have your faults, but I am *not like you*. If you knew my thoughts; the dreams that absorb me; and the fiery imagination that at times eats me up and makes me feel society, as it *is*, wretchedly insipid, you would pity me and I dare say despise me. But, Ellen, I know the treasures of the Bible, and love and adore

them. I can *see* the Well of Life in all its clearness and brightness; but when I stoop down to drink of the pure waters, they fly from my lips as if I were Tantalus. I have written like a fool. Remember me to your mother and sisters. Good-bye.

CHARLOTTE.

Come and see me soon; don't think me mad. This is a silly letter.

Letter 21

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

ROE HEAD.

MY *DEAR, DEAR* ELLEN,—I am at this moment trembling all over with excitement after reading your note; it is what I never received before—it is the unrestrained pouring out of a warm, gentle, generous heart; it contains sentiments unrestrained by human motives, prompted by the pure God himself; it expresses a noble sympathy which I *do* not, *cannot* deserve. Ellen, Religion has indeed elevated your character. I thank you with energy for this kindness. I will no longer shrink from your questions. I *do* wish to be better than I am. I pray fervently sometimes to be made so. I have stings of conscience—visitings of remorse—glimpses of Holy, inexpressible things, which formerly I used to be a stranger to. It may all die away, I may be in utter midnight, but I implore a Merciful Redeemer that if this be the real dawn of the Gospel, it may still brighten to perfect day. Do not mistake me, Ellen, do not think I am good, I only wish to be so, I only hate my former flippancy and forwardness. O! I am no better than I ever was. I am in that state of horrid, gloomy uncertainty, that at this moment I would submit to be old, grey-haired, to have passed all my youthful days of enjoyment and be tottering on the verge of the grave, if I could only thereby ensure the prospect of reconcilement to God and Redemption through His Son's merits. I never was exactly careless of these matters, but I have always taken a clouded and repulsive view of them; and now, if possible, the clouds are gathering darker, and a more oppressive despondency weighs continually on my spirits. You have cheered me, my darling; for one moment, for an atom of time, I thought I might call you my own sister, in the spirit, but the excitement is past, and I am now as wretched and hopeless as ever. This very night I will

pray as you wish me. May the Almighty hear me compassionately! and I humbly trust He will—for you will strengthen my polluted petition with your own pure requests. All is bustle and confusion round me, the ladies pressing with their sums and their lessons. Miss Wooler is at Rouse Mill. She has said every day this week, I wonder Miss Ellen does not come. If you love me, *do, do, do* come on Friday; I shall watch and wait for you, and if you disappoint me, I shall weep. I wish you could know the thrill of delight which I experienced, when, as I stood at the dining-room window, I saw your brother George as he whirled past toss your little packet over the wall. I dare write no more, I am neglecting my duty. Love to your mother and both your sisters. Thank you again a thousand times for your kindness—farewell, my blessed Ellen, CHARLOTTE.

Letter 22

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

ROE HEAD.

Weary with a day's hard work, during which an unusual degree of stupidity has been displayed by my promising pupils, I am sitting down to write a few hurried lines to my dear Ellen. Excuse me if I say nothing but nonsense, for my mind is exhausted and dispirited. It is a stormy evening, and the wind is uttering a continual moaning sound that makes me feel very melancholy. At such times, in such moods as these, Ellen, it is my nature to seek repose in some calm, tranquil idea, and I have now summoned up your image to give me rest. There you sit upright and still in your black dress and white scarf, your pale, marble-like face, looking so serene and kind—just like reality. I wish you would speak to me. If we should be separated—if it should be our lot to live at a great distance, and never to see each other again—in old age how I should conjure up the memory of my youthful days, and what a melancholy pleasure I should feel in dwelling on the recollection of my early friend Ellen Nussey. If I like people it is my nature to tell them so, and I am not afraid of offering incense to your vanity. It is from religion you derive your chief charm, and may its influence always preserve you as pure, as unassuming, and as benevolent in thought and deed as you are now. What am I compared to you? I feel my own utter

worthlessness when I make the comparison. I am a very coarse, commonplace wretch, Ellen. I have some qualities which make me very miserable, some feelings that you can have no participation in, that few, very few people in the world can understand. I don't pride myself on these peculiarities, I strive to conceal and suppress them as much as I can, but they burst out sometimes, and those who see the explosion despise me, and I hate myself for days afterwards. We are going to have prayers, so I can write no more of this trash, yet it is too true. I must send this note for want of a better. I don't know what to say. I have just received your epistle and what accompanied it. I can't tell what should induce your sisters to waste their kindness on such a one as me; I'm obliged to them, and I hope you'll tell them so. I'm obliged to you also, more for your note than for your present. The first gave me pleasure, the last something like pain. Give my love to both your sisters, and my thanks. The bonnet is too handsome for me. I dare write no more. When shall we meet again? C. BRONTË.

Letter 23

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

ROE HEAD.

MY DEAR ELLEN,—You are far too kind and frequent in your invitations. You puzzle me; I hardly know how to refuse, and it is still more embarrassing to accept. At any rate I cannot come this week, for we are in the very thickest mêlée of the Repetitions. I was hearing the terrible fifth section when your note arrived. But Miss Wooler says I must go to Gomersall next Friday as she promised for me on Whit-Sunday; and on Sunday morning I will join you at church if it be convenient, and stay at Rydings till Monday morning. There's a free and easy proposal! Miss Wooler has driven me to it; she says her character is implicated! I am very sorry to hear that your mother has been ill, I do hope she is better now, and that all the rest of the family are well. Will you be so kind as to deliver the accompanying note to Miss Taylor when you see her at church on Sunday. Dear Ellen, excuse the most horrid scrawl ever penned by mortal hands. Remember me to your mother and sisters, and believe me,—Ellen Nussey's friend, CHARLOTTE.

Letter 24

TO MISS ELLEN NUSSEY

ROE HEAD, 1836.

Last Saturday afternoon being in one of my sentimental humours, I sat down and wrote to you such a note as I ought to have written to none but Mary, who is nearly as mad as myself; to-day, when I glanced it over, it occurs to me that Ellen's calm eye would look at this with scorn, so I determined to concoct some production more fit for the inspection of common-sense. I will not tell you all I think and feel about you, Ellen. I will preserve unbroken that reserve which alone enables me to maintain a decent character for judgment; but for that, I should have long ago been set down by all who know me as a Frenchified fool. You have been very kind to me of late, and gentle, and you have spared me those little sallies of ridicule, which, owing to my miserable and wretched touchiness of character, used formerly to make me wince, as if I had been touched with hot iron. Things that nobody else cares for enter into my mind and rankle there like venom. I know these feelings are absurd, and therefore I try to hide them, but they only sting the deeper for concealment. I'm an idiot! I am informed that your brother George was at Mirfield Church last Sunday. Of course I did not *see* him, though guessed his presence because I heard him cough; my short-sightedness makes my ears very acute. The Miss Woolers told me he was there. They were quite smitten; he was the sole subject of their conversation during the whole of the subsequent evening. Miss Eliza described to me every part of his dress, and likewise that of a gentleman who accompanied him, with astonishing minuteness. I laughed most heartily at her graphic details, and so would you if you had been with me.

Ellen, I wish I could live with you always. I begin to cling to you more fondly than ever I did. If we had but a cottage and a competency of our own, I do think we might live and love on till *Death* without being dependent on any third person for happiness. —Farewell, my own dear Ellen.

Letter 25

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, —, 1836.

MY DEAR ELLEN,—Every day during the last fortnight I have been expecting to hear from you, but seeing that no intelligence arrives, I begin to get a little anxious. When will you come? But three weeks now remain of the holidays, and you seem resolved to defer your visit till nearly the last. I hope no whim has got into your head which makes you consider your presence indispensable at home. I do think they could do without you for a little while; and above all and seriously, Ellen, I hope no little touch of anger is still lingering in your mind. Write to me very soon, and dispel my uncertainty, or I shall get impatient, almost irritable. When I was at Huddersfield, whom do you think I saw? Amelia —— and her sister, and mamma, papa, and brother were all at the vicarage when we arrived there on Friday. They were wondrously gracious. Amelia was almost enthusiastic in her professions of friendship; she is taller, thinner, paler, and more delicate-looking than she used to be, very pretty still, very ladylike and polished, but spoilt, utterly spoilt by the most hideous affectation. I wish she would copy her sister, who is indeed an example that affable, unaffected manners and a sweet disposition may fascinate powerfully without the aid of beauty. We spent the Tuesday at Lascelles Hall, and had on the whole a very pleasant day. Miss Amelia changed her character every half-hour; now she assumed the sweet sentimentalist, now the reckless rattler. Sometimes the question was, 'Shall I look prettiest lofty?' and again, 'Would not tender familiarity suit me better?' At one moment she affected to inquire after her old school-acquaintance, the next she was detailing anecdotes of high life. At last I got so sick of this, I turned for relief to her brother; but W., though now grown a tall, well-built man, is an incorrigible booby. From him I could not extract a word of sense.

Papa, aunt, and all the rest unite in kind regards to you. Remember me affectionately and respectfully to your mother and sisters. I hope the former is now quite well. Write soon, *very* soon, fix the day, and believe me,—Yours truly,

CHARLOTTE.

Letter 26

TO ELLEN NUSSEY, CLEVELAND ROW, LONDON

ROE HEAD, 1836.

MY DEAR ELLEN,—I have long been waiting an opportunity of sending a letter to you, as you wished, but as no such opportunity offers itself, I have at length determined to write by post, fearing if I delayed any longer you would attribute my tardiness to indifference. I can scarcely realise the distance that lies between, or the length of time that may elapse before we meet again. Now, Ellen, I have no news to tell you, no changes to communicate. My life since I saw you last has passed on as monotonously and unvaryingly as ever, nothing but teach, teach, teach, from morning till night. The greatest variety I ever have is afforded by a letter from you, or a call from the Taylors, or by meeting with a pleasant new book. *The Life of Oberlin* and Leigh Richmond's *Domestic Portraiture* are the last of this description I have perused. The latter work strongly attracted, and strangely fascinated, my attention. Beg, borrow, or steal it without delay; and read the *Memoir of Wilberforce*, that short record of a brief, uneventful life, I shall never forget; it is beautiful, not on account of the incidents it details, but because of the simple narration it gives of the life and death of a young, talented, and sincere Christian. Get the book, Ellen (I wish I had it to give you), read it, and tell me what you think of it. Yesterday I heard you had been ill since you were in London. What has been your complaint? Are you happier than you were? Try to reconcile your mind to circumstances, and exert the quiet fortitude of which I know you are not destitute. Your absence leaves a sort of vacancy in my feeling which nothing has yet offered of sufficient interest to supply. I do not forget ten o'clock, I remember it every night, and if a sincere petition for your welfare will do you any good, you will be benefited. I know the Bible says, 'The prayer of the *Righteous* availeth much,' and I am *not righteous*, nevertheless I believe God despises no supplication that is uttered in sincerity. Give my most affectionate love to your sister, and a kiss for me to your little favourite niece Georgina, whom I never saw, but whom I almost love in idea for her aunt's sake. My own dear Ellen, good-bye; I can write no more, for I am called to a less pleasant avocation. Do return before winter.

I don't know how I shall get over next half-year without the hope of *seeing* you. Write soon, a long, long letter. Excuse my scrawl.

Letter 27

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

Monday Morning, ROE HEAD.

Return me a scrap by the bearer if it be only a single line, to satisfy me that you have got your bag safely. I met your brother George on the road this afternoon. I did not know it was he until after he was passed, and then Anne told me he would think me amazingly stupid in not moving. Can't help it. I wish I could come to Brookroyd for a single night, but I don't like to ask Miss Wooler. She is at Dewsbury, and I am alone at this moment, eleven o'clock on Tuesday night. I wish you were here.

C. B.

In the Christmas holidays of the year 1836 she wrote to Robert Southey, the Poet Laureate, a letter which I regret does not appear to have been preserved. Southey's reply was printed in his son's *Life*[1] of him :—

Mrs. Gaskell, who prints only a portion of it, tells us that she was with Charlotte at the time Mr. Cuthbert Southey's letter arrived asking permission to insert this letter in his father's *Life*. She said to Mrs. Gaskell, 'Mr. Southey's letter was kind and admirable; a little stringent, but it did me good.' I reproduce the letter as it appears in the biography. A footnote states that 'the lady to whom this and the next letter are addressed is now well known as a prose-writer of no common powers.'

Letter 28

TO —— ——

KESWICK, *March* 1837.

MADAM,—You will probably, ere this, have given up all expectation of receiving an answer to your letter of December 29.

[1] *The Life and Correspondence of the late Robert Southey*, in six volumes, edited by his son, the Rev. Charles Cuthbert Southey. Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1850.

I was on the borders of Cornwall when the letter was written; it found me a fortnight afterwards in Hampshire. During my subsequent movements in different parts of the country, and a tarriance of three busy weeks in London, I had no leisure for replying to it; and now that I am once more at home, and am clearing off the arrears of business which have accumulated during a long absence, it has lain unanswered till the last of a numerous file, not from disrespect or indifference to its contents, but because, in truth, it is not an easy task to answer it, nor a pleasant one to cast a damp over the high spirits and the generous desires of youth. What you are I can only infer from your letter, which appears to be written in sincerity, though I may suspect that you have used a fictitious signature. Be that as it may, the letter and the verses bear the same stamp; and I can well understand the state of mind they indicate. What I am you might have learnt by such of my publications as have come into your hands; and had you happened to be acquainted with me, a little personal knowledge would have tempered your enthusiasm. You might have had your ardour in some degree abated by seeing a poet in the decline of life, and witnessing the effect which age produces upon our hopes and aspirations; yet I am neither a disappointed man nor a discontented one, and you would never have heard from me any chilling sermons upon the text 'All is vanity.'

It is not my advice that you have asked as to the direction of your talents, but my opinion of them; and yet the opinion may be worth little, and the advice much. You evidently possess, and in no inconsiderable degree, what Wordsworth calls the 'faculty of verse.' I am not depreciating it when I say that in these times it is not rare. Many volumes of poems are now published every year without attracting public attention, any one of which, if it had appeared half a century ago, would have obtained a high reputation for its author. Whoever, therefore, is ambitious of distinction in this way ought to be prepared for disappointment.

But it is not with a view to distinction that you should cultivate this talent, if you consult your own happiness. I, who have made literature my profession, and devoted my life to it, and have never for a moment repented of the deliberate choice, think myself, nevertheless, bound in duty to caution every young man who applies as an aspirant to me for encouragement and advice against taking so perilous a course. You will say that a woman has no need of such a caution; there can be no peril in it for her. In a

certain sense this is true; but there is a danger of which I would, with all kindness and all earnestness, warn you. The day dreams in which you habitually indulge are likely to induce a distempered state of mind; and, in proportion as all the ordinary uses of the world seem to you flat and unprofitable, you will be unfitted for them without becoming fitted for anything else. Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be. The more she is engaged in her proper duties, the less leisure will she have for it, even as an accomplishment and a recreation. To those duties you have not yet been called, and when you are you will be less eager for celebrity. You will not seek in imagination for excitement, of which the vicissitudes of this life, and the anxieties from which you must not hope to be exempted, be your state what it may, will bring with them but too much.

But do not suppose that I disparage the gift which you possess, nor that I would discourage you from exercising it. I only exhort you so to think of it, and so to use it, as to render it conducive to your own permanent good. Write poetry for its own sake; not in a spirit of emulation, and not with a view to celebrity; the less you aim at that the more likely you will be to deserve and finally to obtain it. So written, it is wholesome both for the heart and soul; it may be made the surest means, next to religion, of soothing the mind, and elevating it. You may embody in it your best thoughts and your wisest feelings, and in so doing discipline and strengthen them.

Farewell, madam. It is not because I have forgotten that I was once young myself, that I write to you in this strain; but because I remember it. You will neither doubt my sincerity, nor my good-will; and, however ill what has here been said may accord with your present views and temper, the longer you live the more reasonable it will appear to you. Though I may be an ungracious adviser, you will allow me, therefore, to subscribe myself, with the best wishes for your happiness here and hereafter, your true friend, ROBERT SOUTHEY.

The original of this letter was sold at Sotheby's Sale Rooms seventy years later. On the cover were the words in Charlotte Brontë's handwriting—'Southey's advice to be kept for ever. My twenty-first birthday. Roe Head, April 21, 1837.' Here is her reply:—

Letter 29

TO ROBERT SOUTHEY

ROE HEAD, *March* 16*th*, 1837.

SIR,—I cannot rest till I have answered your letter, even though by addressing you a second time I should appear a little intrusive; but I must thank you for the kind and wise advice you have condescended to give me. I had not ventured to hope for such a reply; so considerate in its tone, so noble in its spirit. I must suppress what I feel, or you will think me foolishly enthusiastic.

At the first perusal of your letter I felt only shame and regret that I had ever ventured to trouble you with my crude rhapsody; I felt a painful heat rise to my face when I thought of the quires of paper I had covered with what once gave me so much delight, but which now was only a source of confusion; but after I had thought a little, and read it again and again, the prospect seemed to clear. You do not forbid me to write; you do not say that what I write is utterly destitute of merit. You only warn me against the folly of neglecting real duties for the sake of imaginative pleasures; of writing for the love of fame; for the selfish excitement of emulation. You kindly allow me to write poetry for its own sake, provided I leave undone nothing which I ought to do, in order to pursue that single, absorbing, exquisite gratification. I am afraid, sir, you think me very foolish. I know the first letter I wrote to you was all senseless trash from beginning to end; but I am not altogether the idle, dreaming being it would seem to denote.

My father is a clergyman of limited though competent income, and I am the eldest of his children. He expended quite as much in my education as he could afford in justice to the rest. I thought it therefore my duty, when I left school, to become a governess. In that capacity I find enough to occupy my thoughts all day long, and my head and hands too, without having a moment's time for one dream of the imagination. In the evenings, I confess, I do think, but I never trouble any one else with my thoughts. I carefully avoid any appearance of preoccupation and eccentricity, which might lead those I live amongst to suspect the nature of my pursuits. Following my father's advice—who from my childhood has counselled me, just in the wise and friendly

tone of your letter—I have endeavoured not only attentively to observe all the duties a woman ought to fulfil, but to feel deeply interested in them. I don't always succeed, for sometimes when I 'm teaching or sewing I would rather be reading or writing; but I try to deny myself; and my father's approbation amply rewarded me for the privation. Once more allow me to thank you with sincere gratitude. I trust I shall never more feel ambitious to see my name in print; if the wish should rise, I 'll look at Southey's letter, and suppress it. It is honour enough for me that I have written to him, and received an answer. That letter is consecrated; no one shall ever see it but papa and my brother and sisters. Again I thank you. This incident, I suppose, will be renewed no more; if I live to be an old woman, I shall remember it thirty years hence as a bright dream. The signature which you suspected of being fictitious is my real name. Again, therefore, I must sign myself C. BRONTË.

P.S.—Pray, sir, excuse me for writing to you a second time; I could not help writing, partly to tell you how thankful I am for your kindness, and partly to let you know that your advice shall not be wasted, however sorrowfully and reluctantly it may at first be followed. C. B.

Letter 30

TO CHARLOTTE BRONTË

KESWICK, *March 22nd*, 1837.

DEAR MADAM,—Your letter has given me great pleasure, and I should not forgive myself if I did not tell you so. You have received admonition as considerately and as kindly as it was given. Let me now request that, if you ever should come to these Lakes while I am living here, you will let me see you. You would then think of me afterwards with the more good-will, because you would perceive that there is neither severity nor moroseness in the state of mind to which years and observation have brought me.

It is, by God's mercy, in our power to attain a degree of self-government, which is essential to our own happiness, and contributes greatly to that of those around us. Take care of over-excitement, and endeavour to keep a quiet mind (even for your health it is the best advice that can be given you): your moral

and spiritual improvement will then keep pace with the culture of your intellectual powers.

And now, madam, God bless you!

Farewell, and believe me to be your sincere friend,

ROBERT SOUTHEY.

Meanwhile Branwell Brontë had been cherishing similar ambitions for literary fame. There is one letter of his or a fragment of a letter, that tells of his art ambitions.

Letter 31

TO THE SECRETARY, ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS

SIR,—Having an earnest desire to enter as probationary student in the Royal Academy, but not being possessed of information as to the means of obtaining my desire, I presume to request from you, as Secretary to the Institution, an answer to the questions—

When am I to present my drawings?

At what time?

and especially,

Can I do it in August or September?

—Your obedient servant, BRANWELL BRONTË.

Branwell never seems to have studied at the Royal Academy. He went up to London, but soon returned to Haworth, and had lessons in portrait-painting from William Robinson of Leeds. This was in 1835. In that year we have the first external glimpse of his literary ambitions. In the History of the Publishing House of Blackwood, by Mrs. Oliphant, the famous novelist, there are three letters from Branwell.[1]

Branwell is only eighteen years old when he addresses a long letter to the editor of *Blackwood's Magazine* with the words, 'SIR, READ WHAT I WRITE,' in large letters on his opening page.

[1] See *Annals of a Publishing House, William Blackwood and His Sons, Their Magazine and Friends*, by Mrs. Oliphant, 2 vols. (W. Blackwood & Sons, 1897). I have to thank the courtesy of the present Mr. William Blackwood for permission to publish these three Branwell letters.

Letter 32

TO THE EDITOR OF 'BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE'

HAWORTH, NEAR BRADFORD,
YORKS., *December* 1835.

And would to Heaven you would believe in me, for then you would attend to and act upon it!

I have addressed you twice before, and now I do it again. But it is not from affected hypocrisy that I begin my letter with the name of James Hogg; for the writings of that man in your numbers, his speeches in your *Noctes*, when I was a child, laid a hold on my mind which succeeding years have consecrated into a most sacred feeling. I cannot express, though you can understand, the heavenliness of associations connected with such articles as Professor Wilson's, read and re-read while a little child, with all their poetry of language and divine flights into that visionary region of imagination which one very young would believe reality, and which one entering into manhood would look back upon as a glorious dream. I speak so, sir, because as a child 'Blackwood' formed my chief delight, and I feel certain that no child before enjoyed reading as I did, because none ever had such works as *The Noctes*, *Christmas Dreams*, *Christopher in his Sporting Jacket* to read. And even now, 'Millions o' reasonable creatures at this hour—na', no at this hour,' etc. 'Long, long ago seems the time when we danced hand in hand with our golden-haired sister, whom all who looked on loved. Long, long ago, the day on which she died. That hour so far more dreadful than any hour than can darken us on earth, when she, her coffin and that velvet pall descended, and descended slowly, slowly into the horrid clay, and we were borne deathlike, and wishing to die, out of the churchyard that from that moment we thought we could never enter more.' Passages like these, sir (and when that last was written my sister died)—passages like these, read then and remembered now, afford feelings which, I repeat, I cannot describe. But one of those who roused these feelings is dead, and neither from himself nor yourself shall I hear him speak again. I quiver for his death, because to me he was a portion of feelings which I suppose nothing can rouse hereafter: because to you he was a contributor of sterling originality, and in the *Noctes* a subject for your unequalled writing. He and others like him gave your Magazine the peculiar character which made it famous; as these

men die it will decay unless their places are supplied by others like them. Now, sir, to you I appear writing with conceited assurance: but *I am not*; for I know myself so far as to believe in my own originality, and on that ground to desire admittance into your ranks. And do not wonder that I demand so determinedly: for the remembrances I spoke of have fixed you and your Magazine in such a manner upon my mind that the idea of striving to aid another periodical is *horribly repulsive.* My resolution is to devote my ability to you, and for God's sake, till you see whether or not I can serve you, do not coldly refuse my aid. All, sir, that I desire of you is: *that in answer to this letter you would request a specimen or specimens of my writing, and I even wish that you would name the subject on which you would wish me to write.* In letters previous to this I have perhaps spoken too openly in respect to the extent of my powers. But I did so because I determined to say what I believed. I *know* that I am not one of the wretched writers of the day. I know that I possess strength to assist you beyond some of your own contributors; but I wish to make you the judge in this case and give you the benefit of its decision.

Now, sir, do not act like a commonplace person, but like a man willing to examine for himself. Do not turn from the native truth of my letters, but *prove me*; and if I do not stand the proof, I will not further press myself on you. If I do stand it—why— You have lost an able writer in James Hogg, and God grant you you may get one in PATRICK BRANWELL BRONTË.

This letter was unanswered, as hundreds of such letters from youthful aspirants fail of answers to-day. Four months later came another letter inscribed with large printed characters—'Sir, Read Now At Least.' Mrs. Oliphant suggests that Mr. Robert Blackwood probably thought the writer was crazy.

Letter 33

TO THE EDITOR OF 'BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE'

HAWORTH, *April 8th*, 1836.

The affair which accompanies my letter is certainly sent for insertion in 'Blackwood' as a Specimen which, whether bad or

good, I earnestly desire you to look over; it may be disagreeable, but you will thus KNOW whether, in putting it into the fire, you would gain or lose. It would now be impudent in me to speak of my powers, since in five minutes you can tell whether or not they are fudge or nonsense. But this I know, that if they are such, I have no intention of stooping under them. New powers I will get if I can, and provided I keep them, you, sir, shall see them.

But don't think, sir, that I write nothing but Miseries. My day is far too much in the morning for such continual shadow. Nor think either (and this I entreat) that I wish to deluge you with poetry. I send it because it is soon read and comes from the heart. If it goes to yours, print it, and write to me on the subject of contribution. Then I will send prose. But if what I now send is worthless, what I have said has only been conceit and folly, yet CONDEMN NOT UNHEARD.

Letter 34

TO THE EDITOR OF 'BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE'

9th January 1837.

In a former letter I hinted that I was in possession of something, the design of which, whatever might be its execution, would be superior to that of any series of articles which has yet appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine*. But being prose, of course, and of great length, as well as peculiar in character, a description of it by letter would be quite impossible. So surely a journey of three hundred miles shall not deter me from a knowledge of myself and a hope of utterance into the open world.

Now, sir, all I ask you is to permit this interview, and in answer to this letter to say that you will see me, were it only for one half-hour. The fault be mine if you have reason to repent your permission.

Now, is the trouble of writing a single line to outweigh the certainty of doing good to a fellow-creature and the possibility of doing good to yourself? Will you still so wearisomely refuse me a word when you can neither know what you refuse nor whom you are refusing? Do you think your Magazine so perfect that no addition to its power would be either possible or desirable? Is it pride which actuates you—or custom—or prejudice? Be a

man, sir! and think no more of these things. *Write* to me: tell me that you will receive a visit; and rejoicingly will I take upon myself the labour, which if it succeed, will be an advantage both to you and me, and if it fail, will still be an advantage, because I shall then be assured of the impossibility of succeeding.

Mrs. Oliphant tells us that not one of these letters was ever answered, but that in spite of the chilling reception Branwell wrote again in September 1842, 'begging most respectfully to offer the accompanying lines for insertion in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*.'

Meanwhile Branwell was writing to Wordsworth, but it is probable with even less success:—

Letter 35

TO WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

HAWORTH, NEAR BRADFORD,
YORKSHIRE, *January* 19*th*, 1837.

Sir,—I most earnestly entreat you to read and pass your judgment upon what I have sent you, because from the day of my birth to this the nineteenth year of my life I have lived among secluded hills, where I could neither know what I was or what I could do. I read for the same reason that I ate or drank, because it was a real craving of nature. I wrote on the same principle as I spoke—out of the impulse and feelings of the mind; nor could I help it, for what came, came out, and there was the end of it. For as to self-conceit, that could not receive food from flattery, since to this hour not half-a-dozen people in the world know that I have ever penned a line.

But a change has taken place now, sir; and I am arrived at an age wherein I must do something for myself; the powers I possess must be exercised to a definite end, and as I don't know them myself I must ask of others what they are worth. Yet there is not one here to tell me; and still, if they are worthless, time will henceforth be too precious to be wasted on them.

Do pardon me, sir, that I have ventured to come before one whose works I have most loved in our literature, and who most has been with me a divinity of the mind, laying before him one

of my writings, and asking of him a judgment of its contents. I must come before some one from whose sentence there is no appeal; and such a one is he who has developed the theory of poetry as well as its practice, and both in such a way as to claim a place in the memory of a thousand years to come.

My aim, sir, is to push out into the open world, and for this I trust not poetry alone; that might launch the vessel, but could not bear her on. Sensible and scientific prose, bold and vigorous efforts in my walk in life, would give a further title to the notice of the world; and then again poetry ought to brighten and crown that name with glory. But nothing of all this can be ever begun without means, and as I don't possess these I must in every shape strive to gain them. Surely, in this day, when there is not a *writing* poet worth a sixpence, the field must be open, if a better man can step forward.

What I send you is the Prefatory Scene of a much longer subject, in which I have striven to develop strong passions and weak principles struggling with a high imagination and acute feelings, till, as youth hardens towards age, evil deeds and short enjoyments end in mental misery and bodily ruin. Now, to send you the whole of this would be a mock upon your patience; what you see does not even pretend to be more than the description of an imaginative child. But read it, sir; and, as you would hold a light to one in utter darkness—as you value your own kind-heartedness—*return* me an *answer*, if but one word, telling me whether I should write on, or write no more. Forgive undue warmth, because my feelings in this matter cannot be cool; and believe me, sir, with deep respect, your really humble servant,

P. B. BRONTË.

Letter 36

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

ROE HEAD, *February 20th*, 1837.

I read your letter with dismay, Ellen—what shall I do without you? Why are we so to be denied each other's society? It is an inscrutable fatality. I long to be with you because it seems as if two or three days or weeks spent in your company would beyond measure strengthen me in the enjoyment of those feelings which I have so lately begun to cherish. You first pointed out to me that way in which I am so feebly endeavouring to travel,

and now I cannot keep you by my side, I must proceed sorrowfully alone.

Why are we to be divided? Surely, Ellen, it must be because we are in danger of loving each other too well—of losing sight of the *Creator* in idolatry of the *creature*. At first I could not say, 'Thy will be done.' I felt rebellious; but I know it was wrong to feel so. Being left a moment alone this morning, I prayed fervently to be enabled to resign myself to *every* decree of God's will—though it should be dealt forth with a far severer hand than the present disappointment. Since then, I have felt calmer and humbler—and consequently happier. Last Sunday I took up my Bible in a gloomy frame of mind; I began to read; a feeling stole over me such as I have not known for many long years—a sweet, placid sensation like those that I remember used to visit me when I was a little child, and on Sunday evenings in summer stood by the open window reading the life of a certain French nobleman who attained a purer and higher degree of sanctity than has been known since the days of the early Martyrs. I thought of my own Ellen—I wished she had been near me that I might have told her how happy I was, how bright and glorious the pages of God's holy word seemed to me. But the 'foretaste' passed away, and earth and sin returned. I must see you before you go, Ellen; if you cannot come to Roe Head I will contrive to walk over to Brookroyd, provided you will let me know the time of your departure. Should you not be at home at Easter, I dare not promise to accept your mother's and sisters' invitation. I should be miserable at Brookroyd without you, yet I would contrive to visit them for a few hours if I could not for a few days. I love them for your sake. I have written this note at a venture. When it will reach you I know not, but I was determined not to let slip an opportunity for want of being prepared to embrace it. Farewell; may God bestow on you all His blessings. My darling —Farewell. Perhaps you may return before midsummer—do you think you possibly can? I wish your brother John knew how unhappy I am; he would almost pity me.

C. BRONTË.

The next letter is from Dewsbury Moor whither Miss Wooler's school was now removed. The new school was in a house that has had interesting associations. Heald's House, Dewsbury Moor, had been used by the followers

of George Fox, the Quaker, as a meeting-place in an earlier period, and later it was the birthplace of the Rev. W. M. Heald, the clergyman who is supposed to have possessed many of the characteristics of the Rev. Cyril Hall of *Shirley*. 'Dewsbury is a poisonous place for me,' was Charlotte Brontë's comment long afterwards.

Letter 37

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

DEWSBURY MOOR, *April 2nd*, 1837.

DEAR, DEAR ELLEN,—I should have written to you a week ago, but my time has of late been so wholly taken up that till now I have really not had an opportunity of answering your last letter. I assure you I feel the kindness of so early a reply to my late, tardy correspondence—it gave me a sting of self-reproach. A day or two after I received your last letter, I took a walk over to Brookroyd for the purpose of seeing your sister Mercy, who, you will have heard, has been very ill. I found her much better, and altogether occupied with her poultry-yard, dove-cote, hen-coop, and more especially a batch of nearly-hatched chickens. Mercy has a kindness of heart about her which I like. Your sister A. seemed very dejected. Your mother I thought in somewhat better spirits than usual. All were anxious for your return. The Taylors have got home after their Welsh tour. They spent three weeks at Aberystwyth on the coast. I have not seen Mary since, but Martha rode over a few days ago to give me an account of their proceedings, and from what she said of her sister, I fear her health is not materially improved. The medical men, however, are of opinion that her complaints do not arise from disease in the lungs, but from a disordered stomach. This seems to afford ground for hope. My sister Emily is gone into a situation as teacher in a large school of near forty pupils, near Halifax. I have had one letter from her since her departure; it gives an appalling account of her duties—hard labour from six in the morning until near eleven at night, with only one half-hour of exercise between. This is slavery. I fear she will never stand it. It gives me sincere pleasure, my dear Ellen, to learn that you have at last found a few associates of congenial minds. I cannot conceive a life more dreary than that passed amidst sights, sounds,

and companions all alien to the nature within us. From the tenour of your letter it seems your mind remains fixed as it ever was; in no wise dazzled by novelty or warped by evil example. I am thankful for it. I could not help smiling at the paragraphs which related to ——; there was in them a touch of genuine, unworldly simplicity. Ellen, depend upon it, all people have their dark side—though some possess the power of throwing a fair veil over the defects; close acquaintance slowly removes the screen, and one by one the blots appear, till at length we sometimes see the pattern of perfection all slurred over with blots, that even *partial* affection cannot efface. I hope my next communication with you will be face to face, and not as through a letter darkly. Commending you to the care of One above us all, I remain, still, my *dear* Ellen,—Your friend, C. BRONTË.

Of Emily's stay near Halifax there is even less to record than of Charlotte's stay near Dewsbury, because there are not even her letters. The school at Law Hill was kept at first by Elizabeth and Maria Patchet, but Maria had married before Emily became governess. Elizabeth also married and abandoned the school shortly after Emily had left her. Charlotte in the above letter gives us practically our one glimpse of her sister in this school, and it is a tragic picture.

Letter 38

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *June 8th*, 1837.

MY DEAREST ELLEN,—The enclosed, as you will perceive, was written before I received your last. I had intended to send it by this; what you said altered my intention. I scarce dare build a hope upon the foundation your letter lays—we have been disappointed so often—and I fear I shall not be able to prevail on them to part with you; but I will try my utmost, and, at any rate, there is a chance of our meeting soon; with that thought I will comfort myself. You do not know how selfishly *glad* I am that you still continue to dislike London and the Londoners: it seems to afford a sort of proof that your affections are not changed. Shall we really stand once again together on the moors of

Haworth? I dare not flatter myself with too sanguine an expectation. I see many doubts, and difficulties. But, with Miss Wooler's leave, which I have asked and in part obtained, I will go to-morrow and try to remove them. Give my love to my little sweet correspondent Georgina, and believe me, my own Ellen,—Yours always, and truly, C. BRONTË.

Letter 39

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

MY DEAR ELLEN,—You will excuse a very brief and meagre answer to your kind note, when I tell you that at the moment it reached me, and that just now whilst I am scribbling a reply, the whole house is in the bustle of packing and preparation, for on this day we all go HOME.

Your palliation of my defects is kind and charitable, but I dare not trust its truth; few would regard them with so lenient an eye as you do. Your consolatory admonitions are kind, and when I can read them over in quietness and alone, I trust I shall derive comfort from them; but just now, in the unsettled, excited state of mind which I now feel, I cannot enter into the pure scriptural spirit which they breathe. It would be wrong of me to continue the subject, my thoughts are distracted and absorbed by other ideas. You do not mention your visit to Haworth. Have you spoken of it to the family? Have they agreed to let you come? —but I will write when I get home. Ever since last Friday I have been as busy as I could be in finishing up the half-year's lessons, which concluded with a terrible fag in Geographical Problems (think of explaining that to Misses M. and L.), and subsequently in mending Miss E. L.'s clothes. I am very sorry to hear that poor —— is ill again. Give my love to her, etc. Miss Wooler is calling for me—something about my protégé's nightcaps. Good-bye. We shall meet again ere many days, I trust.

C. BRONTË.

Letter 40

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

I am sure, Ellen, you will conclude that I have taken a final leave of my senses, to forget to send your bag when I had had it

hanging before my eyes in the dressing-room for a whole week. I stood for ten minutes considering before I sent the boy off; I felt sure I had something else to intrust to him besides the books, but I could not recollect what it was. These aberrations of memory warn me pretty intelligibly that I am getting past my prime.

I hope you will not be much inconvenienced by my neglect. I 'll wait till to-morrow, to see if George will call for it on his way to Huddersfield, and if he does not, I 'll try to get a person to go over with it to Brookroyd on purpose. I am most grieved lest you should think me careless, but I assure you it was merely a temporary fit of absence. I wish exceedingly that I could come to see you before Christmas; but I trust ere another three weeks elapse I shall again have my comforter beside me under the roof of my own dear quiet home. If I could always live with you, if your lips and mine could at the same time drink the same draught at the same pure fountain of mercy, I hope, I trust, I might one day become better, far better than my evil wandering thoughts, my corrupt heart, cold to the spirit and warm to the flesh, will now permit me to be. I often plan the pleasant life which we might lead together, strengthening each other in that power of self-denial, that hallowed and glowing devotion which the past Saints of God often attained to. My eyes fill with tears when I contrast the bliss of such a state, brightened with hopes of the future, with the melancholy state I now live in; uncertain that I have ever felt true contrition, wandering in thought and deed, longing for holiness which I shall never, never attain, smitten at times to the heart with the conviction that —— ghastly Calvinistic doctrines are true, darkened, in short, by the very shadows of Spiritual Death! If Christian perfections be necessary to Salvation, I shall never be saved. My heart is a real hot-bed for sinful thoughts, and as to practice, when I decide on an action, I scarcely remember to look to my Redeemer for direction.

I know not how to pray; I cannot bend my life to the grand end of doing good. I go on constantly seeking my own pleasure, pursuing the gratification of my own desires. I forget God, and will not God forget me? and meantime I know the greatness of Jehovah. I acknowledge the truth, the perfection of His Word. I adore the purity of the Christian faith. My theory is right, my practice horribly wrong. Good-bye, Ellen, C. BRONTË.

Write to me again, if you can. Your notes are meat and drink to me. Remember me to the family. I hope Mercy is better.

Letter 41

TO ELLEN NUSSEY, BATHEASTON, BATH

ROE HEAD, —— 1837.

My notes to you, Ellen, are written in a hurry—I am now snatching an opportunity. Mr. J. Wooler is here, and by his means this will be transmitted to you. I do not blame you for not coming to see me, for I am sure you have been prevented by sufficient reasons, but I do long to see you, and I hope I shall be gratified momentarily at least ere long. Next Friday, if all be well, I shall go to Gomersall; on Sunday, I shall at least catch a glimpse of you. Week after week I have lived on the expectation of your coming. Week after week I have been disappointed. I have not regretted what I said in my last note to you; the confession was wrung from me by sympathy and kindness such as I can never be sufficiently thankful for. I feel in a strange state of mind, still gloomy but not despairing. I keep trying to do right, checking wrong feelings, repressing wrong thoughts — but still, every instant, I feel myself going astray. I have a constant endency to scorn people who are far better than I am, horror at the idea of becoming one of a certain set—a dread lest, if I made the slightest profession, I should sink at once into Phariseeism, merge wholly into the rank of the self-righteous. In writing at this moment I feel an irksome disgust at the idea of using a single phrase that sounds like religious cant. I abhor myself—I despise myself; if the doctrine of Calvin be true, I am already an outcast. You cannot imagine how hard, rebellious, and intractable all my feelings are. When I begin to study on the subject, I almost grow blasphemous, atheistical in my sentiments. Don't desert me, don't be horrified at me. You know what I am. I wish I could see you, my darling; I have lavished the warmest affections of a very hot, tenacious heart upon you—if you grow cold, it is over. Love to your mother and sisters. C. BRONTË.

Letter 42

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

DEWSBURY MOOR, *August 24th*, 1837.

MY DEAR ELLEN,—I have determined to write lest you should begin to think I have forgotten you, and in revenge resolve to

forget me. As you will perceive by the date of this letter, I am again engaged in the old business—teach, teach, teach. Miss Eliza Wooler and Mrs. Wooler are coming here next Christmas. Miss Wooler will then relinquish the school in favour of her sister Eliza, but I am happy to say worthy Miss Wooler will continue to reside in the house. I should be sorry indeed to part with her. When will you come *home*? Make haste, you have been at Bath long enough for all purposes. By this time you have acquired polish enough, I am sure. If the varnish is laid on much thicker, I am afraid the good wood underneath will be quite concealed, and your old Yorkshire friends won't stand that. Come, come, I am getting really tired of your absence. Saturday after Saturday comes round, and I can have no hope of hearing your knock at the door and then being told that 'Miss Ellen Nussey is come.' Oh dear! in this monotonous life of mine that was a pleasant event. I wish it would recur again, but it will take two or three interviews before the stiffness, the estrangement of this long separation will quite wear away. I have nothing at all to tell you now but that poor Mary Taylor is better, and that she and Martha are gone to take a tour in Wales. Patty came on her pony about a fortnight since to inform me that this important event was in contemplation. She actually began to fret about your long absence, and to express the most eager wishes for your return. I heard something from your sister about Mr. and Mrs. John Nussey wishing you to stay over the winter; don't be persuaded by them, Ellen, you've been from home long enough—come back. I've just had a visit from Ann Carter. She has stayed at home some weeks longer than the regular vacation; during this time I have seen a great deal of her, and I don't think her at all altered except that her carriage, etc., is improved. She is still the same warm-hearted, affectionate, prejudiced, handsome girl as ever. Write to me as soon as ever you get this scrawl. I should be ashamed of such writing as this, only I am past all shame. My own dear Ellen, good-bye. If we are all spared I hope soon to see you again. God bless you. C. BRONTË.

Miss Wooler is from home or she would send her love, I am sure. Little Edward Carter and his baby sister are staying with us, so that between nursing and teaching I have my time pretty well occupied. So far my health keeps up very well.

Letter 43

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

December 29th, 1837.

My dear Ellen,—I am sure you will have thought me very remiss in not sending my promised letter long before now; but I have a sufficient and very melancholy excuse in an accident that befell our old faithful Tabby, a few days after my return home. She was gone out into the village on some errand, when, as she was descending the steep street, her foot slipped on the ice, and she fell: it was dark, and no one saw her mischance, till after a time her groans attracted the attention of a passer-by. She was lifted up and carried into the druggist's near; and, after the examination, it was discovered that she had completely shattered and dislocated one leg. Unfortunately, the fracture could not be set till six o'clock the next morning, as no surgeon was to be had before that time, and she now lies at our house in a very doubtful and dangerous state. Of course we are all exceedingly distressed at the circumstance, for she was like one of our own family. Since the event we have been almost without assistance—a person has dropped in now and then to do the drudgery, but we have as yet been able to procure no regular servant; and consequently the whole work of the house, as well as the additional duty of nursing Tabby, falls on ourselves. Under these circumstances I dare not press your visit here, at least until she is pronounced out of danger; it would be too selfish of me. Aunt wished me to give you this information before, but papa and all the rest were anxious I should delay until we saw whether matters took a more settled aspect, and I myself kept putting it off from day to day, most bitterly reluctant to give up all the pleasure I had anticipated so long. However, remembering what you told me, namely, that you had commended the matter to a higher decision than ours, and that you were resolved to submit with resignation to that decision, whatever it might be, I hold it my duty to yield also, and to be silent; it may be all for the best. I fear, if you had been here during this severe weather, your visit would have been of no advantage to you, for the moors are blockaded with snow, and you would never have been able to get out. After this disappointment I never dare reckon with certainty on the enjoyment of a pleasure again; it seems as

if some fatality stood between you and me. I am not good enough for you, and you must be kept from the contamination of too intimate society. I would urge your visit yet—I would entreat and press it—but the thought comes across me, should Tabby die while you are in the house, I should never forgive myself. No! it must not be, and in a thousand ways the consciousness of that mortifies and disappoints me most keenly, and I am not the only one who is disappointed. All in the house were looking to your visit with eagerness. Papa says he highly approves of my friendship with you, and he wishes me to continue it through life. I hope your sister is better, and that all the rest of the family are well. Give my love to your brothers and sisters, and believe me, vexed and grieved, your friend, C. BRONTË.

If you don't write soon, in my crabbed state of mind I shall conclude that you 've cut me.

Letter 44

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

January 4th, 1838.

Your letter, Ellen, was a welcome surprise, even though it contains something like a reprimand. I had not, however, forgotten our agreement; I had prepared a note to be forthcoming against the arrival of your messenger, but things so happened that it was of no avail. You were right in your conjectures respecting the cause of my sudden departure. Anne continued wretchedly ill—neither the pain nor the difficulty of breathing left her—and how could I feel otherwise than very miserable? I looked upon her case in a different light to what I could wish or expect any uninterested person to view it in. Miss Wooler thought me a fool, and by way of proving her opinion treated me with marked coldness. We came to a little éclaircissement one evening. I told her one or two rather plain truths, which set her a-crying, and the next day, unknown to me, she wrote to papa, telling him that I had reproached her bitterly — taken her severely to task, etc., etc. Papa sent for us the day after he had received her letter. Meantime, I had formed a firm resolution—to quit Miss Wooler and her concerns for ever—but just before I went away she took me into her room, and giving way to her

feelings, which in general she restrains far too rigidly, gave me to understand that in spite of her cold repulsive manners she had a considerable regard for me and would be very sorry to part with me. If anybody likes me I can't help liking them, and remembering that she had in general been very kind to me, I gave in and said I would come back if she wished me—so we're settled again for the present; but I am not satisfied. I should have respected her far more if she had turned me out of doors instead of crying for two days and two nights together. I was in a regular passion; my '*warm temper*' quite got the better of me—of which I don't boast, for it was a weakness; nor am I ashamed of it, for I had reason to be angry. Anne is now much better, though she still requires a great deal of care. However, I am relieved from my worst fears respecting her.

I approve highly of the plan you mention, except as it regards committing a verse of the psalms to memory; I do not see the direct advantage to be derived from that. We have entered on a new year; will it be stained as darkly as the last, with all our sins, follies, secret vanities, and uncontrolled passions and propensities? I trust not, but I feel in nothing better—neither humbler nor purer. It will want three weeks next Monday to the termination of the holidays. Come to see me, my *dear* Ellen, as soon as you can. However bitterly I sometimes feel towards other people, the recollection of your mild, steady friendship consoles and softens me. I am glad you are not such a weak fool as myself. Give my best love to your mother and sisters, excuse the most hideous scrawl that ever was penned, and believe me always tenderly yours, C. BRONTË.

Letter 45

TO ELLEN NUSSEY, 4 CLEVELAND ROW, ST. JAMES'S, LONDON

DEWSBURY MOOR, *May 5th*, 1838.

MY DEAREST ELLEN,—Yesterday I heard that you were ill. Mr. and Miss Heald were at Dewsbury Moor, and it was from them I obtained the information. This morning I set off to Brookroyd to learn further particulars, from whence I am but just returned. Your mother is in great distress about you; she can

hardly mention your name without tears; and both she and Mercy wish very much to see you at home again. Poor girl, you have been a fortnight confined to your bed; and while I was blaming you in my own mind for not writing, you were suffering in sickness without one kind *female* friend to watch over you. I should have heard all this before and have hastened to express my sympathy with you in this crisis had I been able to visit Brookroyd in the Easter holidays, but an unexpected summons back to Dewsbury Moor, in consequence of the illness and death of Mr. Wooler, prevented it. Since that time I have been a fortnight and two days quite alone, Miss Wooler being detained in the interim at Rouse Mill. You will now see, Ellen, that it was not neglect or failure of affection which has occasioned my silence, though I fear you will long ago have attributed it to those causes. If you are well enough, do write to me just two lines—just to assure me of your convalescence; not a word, however, if it would harm you—not a syllable. They value you at home. Sickness and absence call forth expressions of attachment which might have remained long enough unspoken if their object had been present and well. I wish your *friends* (I include myself in that word) may soon cease to have cause for so painful an excitement of their regard. As yet I have but an imperfect idea of the nature of your illness—of its extent—or of the degree in which it may now have subsided. When you can let me know all, no particular, however minute, will be uninteresting to me. How have your spirits been? I trust not much overclouded, for that is the most melancholy result of illness. You are not, I understand, going to Bath at present; they seem to have arranged matters strangely. When I parted from you near White-lee Bar, I had a more sorrowful feeling than ever I experienced before in our temporary separations. It is foolish to dwell too much on the idea of presentiments, but I certainly had a feeling that the time of our reunion had never been so indefinite or so distant as then. I doubt not, my dear Ellen, that amidst your many trials, amidst the sufferings that you have of late felt in yourself, and seen in several of your relations, you have still been able to look up and find support in trial, consolation in affliction, and repose in tumult, where human interference can make no change. I think you know in the right spirit how to withdraw yourself from the vexation, the care, the meanness of life, and to derive comfort from purer sources than this world can afford. You know how to

do it silently, unknown to others, and can avail yourself of that hallowed communion the Bible gives us with God. I am charged to transmit your mother's and sister's love. Receive mine in the same parcel; I think it will scarcely be the smallest share. Farewell my dear Ellen. C. BRONTË.

CHAPTER VIII

MRS. SIDGWICK'S NURSERY GOVERNESS

If Charlotte Brontë found her whole soul in revolt at the life of a governess in a small school where the two head-mistresses looked upon themselves as her personal friends, she was not likely to meet with a happier lot when she elected to try the life of a private governess. Yet it seemed to be the only career that offered itself to Miss Brontë—aged twenty-two—at this time. Anne was with her at Haworth, back from Miss Wooler's school, but eager for independence. Emily had had enough of such 'independence'; she had left the hateful discipline of Miss Patchett's uncongenial 'Academy.' Branwell, although of an age when he should have been earning money, had already begun that restless, ill-judged career of dissipation that was so soon to wreck his life. He alternated between Haworth and Bradford, where he rented a studio in Fountain Street; painting now and again a portrait, one, for example, of his uncle, the Rev. William Morgan, but lounging for the most part in the bar of the George Hotel in this latter town, where among his cronies were John James, the future historian of Bradford; Wilson Anderson, a landscape-painter; Geller, the mezzotinto-engraver; Richard Waller, a portrait-painter, and occasionally Leyland the sculptor.[1] Branwell clearly was costing his father money, and Charlotte and Anne had to think of a plan to help. Meanwhile a way of escape for the elder sister had presented itself. Charlotte Brontë received

[1] *The Brontë Family, with special reference to Patrick Branwell Brontë*, by Francis A. Leyland. 2 vols. Hurst and Blackett. 1886.

an offer of marriage. The lover was her friend Ellen Nussey's brother Henry. He was at this time a curate at Donnington in Sussex. He afterwards became rector of Earnley, near Chichester, and later of Hathersage in Derbyshire.[1] The next five letters prior to her leaving Haworth explain themselves.

[1] I have read a volume of Mr. Nussey's *Diary and Sermons* in manuscript. It is in the possession of Mr. J. J. Stead, of Heckmondwike, Yorkshire. Mr. Nussey has one point at least in common with Rivers, in *Jane Eyre*, that during his days at Cambridge he more than once records in his diary that he has heard Mr. Simeon preach; and Simeon was the great Evangelical light of that epoch. Mr. Nussey certainly did not lack for rigour, for even when an undergraduate he recalls with satisfaction, 'This evening at a full meeting Mr. Heald exhorted from 2 Corinthians vi. 14, on the action of a member having married a worldly-minded man'; on another occasion, that 'Stayed to supper; never asked to take family prayers nor to say grace. Much hurt that they did not see the propriety and feel the necessity of this line of conduct'; and once more, Mr. Nussey writes in his diary: 'Friday, 11 June 1839. Obtained an advance of £1 from Mr. Wakeford, a farmer and coal-merchant in Earnley, with whom I spent the evening at his house. He unfortunately became offended at something Mr. Browne once uttered in the pulpit, and thereupon left the Church and joined the Dissenters at Chichester, where he still continues. There seem some good traits in the man, and I think he errs through ignorance rather than wilfulness. May he be brought back again, wandering sheep!' Side by side with such quotations as these we have Mr. Nussey's matter-of-fact attempts to get a wife. He first asked the daughter of his former vicar, Lutwigge, whom he characterises as 'a steady, intelligent, sensible and, I trust, good girl, named Mary'; she refused him, and we have the following lines in his diary: 'On Tuesday last received a decisive reply from M. A. L.'s papa; a loss, but I trust a providential one. Believe not her will, but her father's. All right, but God knows best what is good for us, for His church, and for His own glory. Write to a Yorkshire friend, C. B.' A little later on, March 8, 1839, we find the record—'Received an unfavourable reply from "C. B." The will of the Lord be done.' 'C. B.,' of course, is Charlotte Brontë, and some might find satisfaction in the fact that the marriage which this matter-of-fact individual attained to a very few months later should have turned out unhappily. In Mr. Nussey, however, we have not in the least Charlotte Brontë's creation, St. John Rivers. There are a few references to missionary work in Mr. Nussey's diary, but on the whole it is the diary of a dull, uninspired person, with not sufficient brains to be a high-souled fanatic; and it is a high-souled fanatic that Miss Brontë depicts in her book. That is why I am inclined to think that the real prototype of Rivers existed for her not in life but in literature; that she had read from the Keighley Library Sargent's *Memoir of Henry Martyn*, that devoted missionary from Cornwall, of whom her aunt must have constantly spoken to her, and her father also, for he was practically contemporaneous with him at St. John's College, Cambridge, a fact which probably led her to give Rivers his Christian name of St. John. It was Charles Simeon again, her father's favourite preacher, who led Martyn to become a missionary. Martyn, it will be remembered, translated the New Testament into Hindustani. There are points also in the relations with Miss Lydia Grenfell, whom he had hoped to take back with him to India when he died of the plague, that unquestionably recall St. John Rivers. Martyn has been described by Sir James Stephen as 'the one heroic name which adorns the Church of England from the days of Queen Elizabeth to our own.' —From *Charlotte Brontë and Her Sisters*. Literary Lives Series (Hodder and Stoughton).

Letter 46

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *June 7th*, 1838.

MY DEAR ELLEN,—I received your packet of despatches on Wednesday. It was brought me by Mary and Martha Taylor, who have been staying at Haworth for a few days. They leave us to-day, and I am hastily scrawling this letter to be ready for transmission by them to your friends when they return. You will be surprised when you see the date of this letter. I ought to be at Dewsbury Moor, you know, but I stayed as long as I was able, and at length I neither could nor dared stay any longer. My health and spirits had utterly failed me, and the medical man whom I consulted enjoined me, if I valued my life, to go home. So home I went; the change has at once roused and soothed me, and I am now, I trust, fairly in the way to be myself again. A calm and even mind like yours, Ellen, cannot conceive the feelings of the shattered wretch who is now writing to you, when, after weeks of mental and bodily anguish not to be described, something like tranquillity and ease began to dawn again. I will not enlarge on the subject; to me, every recollection of the past half-year is painful—to you it cannot be pleasant. Mary Taylor is far from well. I have watched her narrowly during her visit to us. Her lively spirits and bright colour might delude you into a belief that all was well, but she breathes short, has a pain in her chest, and frequent flushings of fever. I cannot tell you what agony these symptoms give me. They remind me strongly of my two sisters whom no power of medicine could save. I trust she may recover; her lungs certainly are not ulcerated yet, she has no cough, no pain in the side, and perhaps this hectic fever may be only the temporary effects of a severe winter and a late spring on a delicate constitution. Martha is now very well; she has kept in a constant flow of good-humour during her stay here, and has consequently been very fascinating. I fear from what you say I cannot rationally entertain hopes of seeing you before winter. For your own sake, I am glad of it. I do not now fear that society will estrange your heart, and I know it will so polish you externally, that the mind will be generally appreciated through the medium of the manners. They are making such a noise about me I cannot write any more. Mary is playing on the

piano ; Martha is chattering as fast as her little tongue can run ; and Branwell is standing before her, laughing at her vivacity. My dear Ellen, good-bye. Aunt and my sisters unite in best love to you. Good-bye, love.

P.S.—Write to me as often as you can find time.

Letter 47

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

January 12*th*, 1839.

MY *DEAR, KIND* ELLEN,—I can hardly help laughing when I reckon up the number of urgent invitations I have received from you during the last three months. Had I accepted all or even half of them, the Birstallians would certainly have concluded that I had come to make Brookroyd my permanent residence. When you set your mind upon it, you have a peculiar way of edging one in with a circle of dilemmas, so that they hardly know how to refuse you ; however, I shall take a running leap and clear them all. Frankly, my dear Ellen, I *cannot come.* Reflect for yourself a moment. Do you see nothing absurd in the idea of a person coming again into a neighbourhood within a month after they have taken a solemn and formal leave of all their acquaintance? However, I thank both you and your mother for the invitation, which was most kindly expressed. You give no answer to my proposal that you should come to Haworth with the Taylors. I still think it would be your best plan. I wish you and the Taylors were safely here ; there is no pleasure to be had without toiling for it. You must invite me no more, my dear Ellen, until next Midsummer at the nearest. All here desire to be remembered to you, aunt particularly. Angry though you are, I will venture to sign myself as usual (no, not as usual, but as suits circumstances).—Yours, under a cloud, C. BRONTË.

Letter 48

TO THE REV. HENRY NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *March* 5*th*, 1839.

MY DEAR SIR,—Before answering your letter I might have spent a long time in consideration of its subject ; but as from the first moment of its reception and perusal I determined on what

course to pursue, it seemed to me that delay was wholly unnecessary. You are aware that I have many reasons to feel grateful to your family, that I have peculiar reasons for affection towards one at least of your sisters, and also that I highly esteem yourself—do not therefore accuse me of wrong motives when I say that my answer to your proposal must be a *decided negative.* In forming this decision, I trust I have listened to the dictates of conscience more than to those of inclination. I have no personal repugnance to the idea of a union with you, but I feel convinced that mine is not the sort of disposition calculated to form the happiness of a man like you. It has always been my habit to study the characters of those amongst whom I chance to be thrown, and I think I know yours and can imagine what description of woman would suit you for a wife. The character should not be too marked, ardent, and original, her temper should be mild, her piety undoubted, her spirits even and cheerful, and her *personal attractions* sufficient to please your eyes and gratify your just pride. As for me, you do not know me; I am not the serious, grave, cool-headed individual you suppose; you would think me romantic and eccentric; you would say I was satirical and severe. However, I scorn deceit, and I will never, for the sake of attaining the distinction of matrimony and escaping the stigma of an old maid, take a worthy man whom I am conscious I cannot render happy. Before I conclude, let me thank you warmly for your other proposal regarding the school near Donnington. It is kind in you to take so much interest about me; but the fact is, I could not at present enter upon such a project because I have not the capital necessary to insure success. It is a pleasure to me to hear that you are so comfortably settled and that your health is so much improved. I trust God will continue His kindness towards you. Let me say also that I admire the good sense and absence of flattery and cant which your letter displayed. Farewell. I shall always be glad to hear from you as a *friend.*—Believe me, yours truly,

C. BRONTË.

Letter 49

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *March* 12*th*, 1839.

MY DEAREST ELLEN,—When your letter was put into my hands, I said, 'She is coming at last, I hope,' but when I opened

it and found what the contents were, I was vexed to the heart. You need not ask me to go to Brookroyd any more. Once for all, and at the hazard of being called the most stupid little wretch that ever existed, I *won't go* till you have been to Haworth. I don't blame *you*, I believe you would come if you might; perhaps I ought not to blame others, but I am grieved.

Anne goes to Blake Hall on the 8th of April, unless some further unseen cause of delay should occur. I've heard nothing more from Mrs. Thos. Brooke as yet. Papa wishes me to remain at home a little longer, but I begin to be anxious to set to work again; and yet it will be *hard work* after the indulgence of so many weeks, to return to that dreary 'gin-horse' round.

You ask me, my dear Ellen, whether I have received a letter from Henry. I have, about a week since. The contents, I confess, did a little surprise me, but I kept them to myself, and unless you had questioned me on the subject, I would never have adverted to it. Henry says he is comfortably settled at Donnington, that his health is much improved, and that it is his intention to take pupils after Easter. He then intimates that in due time he should want a wife to take care of his pupils, and frankly asks me to be that wife. Altogether the letter is written without cant or flattery, and in a common-sense style, which does credit to his judgment.

Now, my dear Ellen, there were in this proposal some things which might have proved a strong temptation. I thought if I were to marry Henry Nussey, his sister could live with me, and how happy I should be. But again I asked myself two questions: Do I love him as much as a woman ought to love the man she marries? Am I the person best qualified to make him happy? Alas! Ellen, my conscience answered *no* to both these questions. I felt that though I esteemed, though I had a kindly leaning towards him, because he is an amiable and well-disposed man, yet I had not, and could not have, that intense attachment which would make me willing to die for him; and, if ever I marry, it must be in that light of adoration that I will regard my husband. Ten to one I shall never have the chance again; but *n'importe*. Moreover, I was aware that Henry knew so little of me he could hardly be conscious to whom he was writing. Why, it would startle him to see me in my natural home character; he would think I was a wild, romantic enthusiast indeed. I could not sit all day long making a grave face before my husband. I would

laugh, and satirise, and say whatever came into my head first. And if he were a clever man, and loved me, the whole world weighed in the balance against his smallest wish should be light as air. Could I, knowing my mind to be such as that, conscientiously say that I would take a grave, quiet, young man like Henry? No, it would have been deceiving him, and deception of that sort is beneath me. So I wrote a long letter back, in which I expressed my refusal as gently as I could, and also candidly avowed my reasons for that refusal. I described to him, too, the sort of character that would suit him for a wife. Write to me soon and say whether you are angry with me or not. —Good-bye, my dear Ellen. C. BRONTË.

Letter 50

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *April* 15*th*, 1839.

I could not write to you in the week you requested, as about that time we were very busy in preparing for Anne's departure. Poor child! she left us last Monday; no one went with her; it was her own wish that she might be allowed to go alone, as she thought she could manage better and summon more courage if thrown entirely upon her own resources. We have had one letter from her since she went. She expresses herself very well satisfied, and says that Mrs. Ingham is extremely kind; the two eldest children alone are under her care, the rest are confined to the nursery, with which and its occupants she has nothing to do. Both her pupils are desperate little dunces; neither of them can read, and sometimes they profess a profound ignorance of their alphabet. The worst of it is they are excessively indulged, and she is not empowered to inflict any punishment. She is requested, when they misbehave themselves, to inform their mamma, which she says is utterly out of the question, as in that case she might be making complaints from morning till night. So she alternately scolds, coaxes, and threatens, sticks always to her first word, and gets on as well as she can. I hope she'll do. You would be astonished what a sensible, clever letter she writes; it is only the talking part that I fear. But I do seriously apprehend that Mrs. Ingham will sometimes conclude that she has a natural impediment of speech. For my own part,

I am as yet 'wanting a situation,' like a housemaid out of place. By the way, I have lately discovered I have quite a talent for cleaning, sweeping up hearths, dusting rooms, making beds, etc.; so, if everything else fails, I can turn my hand to that, if anybody will give me good wages for little labour. I won't be a cook; I hate cooking. I won't be a nursery-maid, nor a lady's-maid, far less a lady's companion, or a mantua-maker, or a straw-bonnet maker, or a taker-in of plain work. I won't be anything but a housemaid. Setting aside nonsense, I was very glad, my dear Ellen, to learn by your last letter that some improvement had taken place in your health, for occasionally I have felt more uneasy about you than I would willingly confess to yourself. I verily believe that a visit to Haworth would now greatly help to restore you, and there can be no objection on account of cold when the weather is so much milder. However angry you are, I still stick to my resolution that I will go no more to Brookroyd till you have been to Haworth. I think I am right in this determination, and I 'll abide by it. It does not arise from resentment, but from reason. I have never for a moment supposed that the reluctance of your friends to allow you to leave home arose from any ill-will to me. It was quite natural, in your precarious state of health, to desire to keep you at home, but that argument does not now hold good. With regard to my visit to Gomersall, I have as yet received no invitation; but if I should be asked, though I should feel it a great act of self-denial to refuse, yet I have almost made up my mind to do so, though the society of the Taylors is one of the most rousing pleasures I have ever known. I wish you good-bye, my darling Ellen, and I tell you once more that I want to see you. Strike out that word *darling*, it is humbug, where 's the use of protestations? We 've known each other, and *liked* each other a *good while*, that 's enough.

C. BRONTË.

Behold Charlotte Brontë then at Stonegappe, some four miles from Skipton. The house, 'a commodious but plain residence,' is beautifully situated on the side of a hill looking down into the valley of a little stream called Lothersdale Beck. It was built at the end of the eighteenth century by Mr. William Sidgwick of Skipton, father of Mr. John Benson Sidgwick, to whose children Charlotte Brontë

acted as governess.[1] Mr. Sidgwick was a cousin of Archbishop Benson, who, although a frequent visitor to Stonegappe, did not apparently meet Charlotte Brontë. His son and biographer, Mr. A. C. Benson, says:—

> Charlotte Brontë acted as governess to my cousins at Stonegappe for a few months in 1839. Few traditions of her connection with the Sidgwicks survive. She was, according to her own account, very unkindly treated, but it is clear that she had no gifts for the management of children, and was also in a very morbid condition the whole time. My cousin Benson Sidgwick, now vicar of Ashby Parva, certainly on one occasion threw a Bible at Miss Brontë! and all that another cousin can recollect of her is that if she was invited to walk to church with them, she thought she was being ordered about like a slave; if she was not invited, she imagined she was excluded from the family circle. Both Mr. and Mrs. John Sidgwick were extraordinarily benevolent people, much beloved, and would not wittingly have given pain to any one connected with them.[2]

Elsewhere Mr. Benson tells us that one of the children told him that if Miss Brontë was desired to accompany them to church—'Oh, Miss Brontë, do run up and put on your things, we want to start'—she was plunged in dudgeon because she was being treated as a hireling. If, in consequence, she was not invited to accompany them, she was infinitely depressed because she was treated as an outcast and a friendless dependent.

This is to show the other side of the shield to the one presented by the unhappy governess. The two views are not necessarily conflicting, and it would embody but half the truth to assert that Charlotte Brontë saw everything through a distorted vision. The attitude of many kindly

[1] The house is two and a half miles from Cononley Station on the main line of the Midland Railway. See for a fuller description Mr. Herbert E. Wroot's *Persons and Places of the Brontë Novels.* 'Jane Eyre.' Brontë Society Publications.

[2] *The Life of Edward White Benson, sometime Archbishop of Canterbury*, 2 vols. Macmillan. Two clever members of this gifted family, Mrs. Alfred Sidgwick the novelist, and Miss G. E. Mitton the biographer and essayist, have also written to me as to the lovable qualities of Mrs. John Sidgwick.

and humane people towards their dependants differs entirely from that adopted towards their equals, and there is much significance in the story related by Mrs. Gaskell of one of the little boys when heard saying, 'I love 'ou, Miss Brontë,' being remonstrated with by his mother, who exclaimed before all the children, 'Love the *governess*, my dear!

Letter 51

TO EMILY J. BRONTË

STONEGAPPE, *June 8th*, 1839.

DEAREST LAVINIA,—I am most exceedingly obliged to you for the trouble you have taken in seeking up my things and sending them all right. The box and its contents were most acceptable. I only wish I had asked you to send me some letter-paper. This is my last sheet but two. When you can send the other articles of raiment now manufacturing, I shall be right down glad of them.

I have striven hard to be pleased with my new situation. The country, the house, and the grounds are, as I have said, divine. But, alack-a-day! there is such a thing as seeing all beautiful around you—pleasant woods, winding white paths, green lawns, and blue sunshiny sky—and not having a free moment or a free thought left to enjoy them in. The children are constantly with me, and more riotous, perverse, unmanageable cubs never grew. As for correcting them, I soon quickly found that was entirely out of the question: they are to do as they like. A complaint to Mrs. Sidgwick brings only black looks upon oneself, and unjust, partial excuses to screen the children. I have tried that plan once. It succeeded so notably that I shall try it no more. I said in my last letter that Mrs. Sidgwick did not know me. I now begin to find that she does not intend to know me, that she cares nothing in the world about me except to contrive how the greatest possible quantity of labour may be squeezed out of me, and to that end she overwhelms me with oceans of needlework, yards of cambric to hem, muslin nightcaps to make, and, above all things, dolls to dress. I do not think she likes me at all, because I can't help being shy in such an entirely novel scene, surrounded as I have hitherto been by strange and constantly

changing faces. I see now more clearly than I have ever done before that a private governess has no existence, is not considered as a living and rational being except as connected with the wearisome duties she has to fulfil. While she is teaching the children, working for them, amusing them, it is all right. If she steals a moment for herself she is a nuisance. Nevertheless, Mrs. Sidgwick is universally considered an amiable woman. Her manners are fussily affable. She talks a great deal, but as it seems to me not much to the purpose. Perhaps I may like her better after a while. At present I have no call to her. Mr. Sidgwick is in my opinion a hundred times better—less profession, less bustling condescension, but a far kinder heart. It is very seldom that he speaks to me, but when he does I always feel happier and more settled for some minutes after. He never asks me to wipe the children's smutty noses or tie their shoes or fetch their pinafores or set them a chair. One of the pleasantest afternoons I have spent here—indeed, the only one at all pleasant—was when Mr. Sidgwick walked out with his children, and I had orders to follow a little behind. As he strolled on through his fields with his magnificent Newfoundland dog at his side, he looked very like what a frank, wealthy, Conservative gentleman ought to be. He spoke freely and unaffectedly to the people he met, and though he indulged his children and allowed them to tease himself far too much, he would not suffer them grossly to insult others.

I am getting quite to have a regard for the Carter family. At home I should not care for them, but here they are friends. Mr. Carter was at Mirfield yesterday and saw Anne. He says she was looking uncommonly well. Poor girl, *she* must indeed wish to be at home. As to Mrs. Collins' report that Mrs. Sidgwick intended to keep me permanently, I do not think that such was ever her design. Moreover, I would not stay without some alterations. For instance, this burden of sewing would have to be removed. It is too bad for anything. I never in my whole life had my time so fully taken up. Next week we are going to Swarcliffe, Mr. Greenwood's place near Harrogate, to stay three weeks or a month. After that time I hope Miss Hoby will return. Don't show this letter to papa or aunt, only to Branwell. They will think I am never satisfied, wherever I am. I complain to you because it is a relief, and really I have had some unexpected mortifications to put up with. However, things may

mend, but Mrs. Sidgwick expects me to do things that I cannot do—to love her children and be entirely devoted to them. I am really very well. I am so sleepy that I can write no more. I must leave off. Love to all.—Good-bye.

Direct your next despatch—J. Greenwood, Esq., Swarcliffe, near Harrogate.. C. BRONTË.

Letter 52

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

July 1st, 1839.

MY DEAREST ELLEN,—I am writing a letter to you with pencil because I cannot just now procure ink without going into the drawing-room—where I do not wish to go. I only received your letter yesterday, for we are not now residing at Stonegappe, but at Swarcliffe, a summer residence of Mr. Greenwood's, Mrs. Sidgwick's father. It is near Harrogate and Ripon ; a beautiful place in a beautiful country—rich and agricultural. I should have written to you long since, and told you of every detail of the utterly new scene into which I have lately been cast, had I not been daily expecting a letter from yourself, and wondering and lamenting that you did not write, for you will remember it was your turn. I must not bother you too much with my sorrows, Ellen, of which I fear you have heard an exaggerated account ; if you were near me, perhaps I might be tempted to tell you all—to grow egotistical and pour out the long history of a Private Governess' trials and crosses in her first situation. As it is, I will only ask you to imagine the miseries of a reserved wretch like me, thrown at once into the midst of a large family — proud as peacocks and wealthy as Jews—at a time when they were particularly gay, when the house was full of company—all strangers, people whose faces I had never seen before—in this state of things having the charge given me of a set of pampered, spoilt, and turbulent children, whom I was expected constantly to amuse as well as instruct. I soon found that the constant demand on my stock of animal spirits reduced them to the lowest state of exhaustion ; at times I felt and I suppose seemed depressed. To my astonishment I was taken to task on the subject by Mrs. Sidgwick with a stress of manner and a harshness of language scarcely credible. Like a fool, I cried most bitterly ; I could not help it—my spirits quite failed me at first. I thought I had done

my best—strained every nerve to please her—and to be treated in that way merely because I was shy and sometimes melancholy was too bad. At first I was for giving all up and going home, but after a little reflection I determined to summon what energy I had and to weather the storm. I said to myself I have never yet quitted a place without gaining a friend. Adversity is a good school—the Poor are born to labour, and the Dependent to endure. I resolved to be patient—to command my feelings and to take what came; the ordeal, I reflected, would not last many weeks, and I trusted it would do me good. I recollected the fable of the Willow and the Oak; I bent quietly, and I trust now the storm is blowing over me. Mrs. Sidgwick is generally considered an agreeable woman; so she is, I dare say, in general Society. Her health is sound, her animal spirits are good; consequently she is cheerful in company. But, oh! Ellen, does this compensate for the absence of every fine feeling, of every gentle and delicate sentiment?

She behaves somewhat more civilly to me now than she did at first, and the children are a little more manageable; but she does not know my character, and she does not wish to know it. I have never had five minutes' conversation with her since I came—except while she was scolding me. Do not communicate the contents of this letter to any one — I have no wish to be *pitied*, except by yourself—do not even clatter with Martha Taylor about it. If I were talking to you I would tell you much more; but I hope my term of bondage will soon be expired, and then I can go home and you can come to see me; and I hope we shall be happy. Good-bye, *dear*, *dear* Ellen.

Write to me again very soon and tell me how you are; direct J. Greenwood, Esquire, Swarcliffe, Nr. Harrogate. Perhaps, though I may be at home before you write again. I don't intend to stay long after they leave Swarcliffe, which they expect shortly to do.

Letter 53

TO EMILY J. BRONTË

July —, 1839.

Mine bonnie love, I was as glad of your letter as tongue can express: it is a real, genuine pleasure to hear from home; a thing to be saved till bedtime, when one has a moment's quiet and rest

to enjoy it thoroughly. Write whenever you can. I could like to be at home. I could like to work in a mill. I could feel mental liberty. I could like this weight of restraint to be taken off. But the holidays will come. *Corragio.*

Charlotte Brontë was rather less than three months in the Sidgwick family, and more than half the time was spent at Swarcliffe whence she accompanied the house party to see Norton Conyers, and heard the story of the mad woman associated with the mansion that she used to good purpose in *Jane Eyre.*

CHAPTER IX

THE ART OF LOVE

The experiment of governess to Mrs. Sidgwick having failed, there was nothing for it but to begin again. And so the weary round of applications went on, some of which are reflected in the following letters. The correspondence is here enlivened by a second proposal of marriage and above all by much sound advice on the part of Charlotte Brontë on the whole theory and practice of love and the relations of a wife to her husband.

Letter 54

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *July 26th*, 1839.

Your proposal has almost driven me 'clean daft.' If you don't understand that ladylike expression you must ask me what it means when I see you. The fact is, an excursion with you anywhere, whether to Cleathorpe or Canada, just by ourselves, would be to me most delightful. I should indeed like to go; but I can't get leave of absence for longer than a week, and I'm afraid that would not suit you. Must I, then, give it up entirely? I feel as if I *could not.* I never had such a chance of enjoyment before; I do want to see you and talk to you, and be with you. When do you wish to go? Could I meet you at Leeds? To take a gig from Haworth to Birstall would be to me a very serious increase of expense, and I happen to be very low in cash. Oh! Ellen, rich people seem to have many pleasures at their command which we are debarred from! However, no repining. If I could take the coach from Keighley to Bradford, and thence to Leeds, and you could meet me at the inn, it would be the most convenient plan for me. I left Stonegappe a week since. I never was so glad

to get out of a house in my life, but I 'll trouble you with no complaints at present. Write to me directly ; explain your plans more fully.

Say when you go, and I shall be able in my answer to say decidedly whether I can accompany you or not. I must—I will—I 'm set upon it—I 'll be obstinate and bear down all opposition. Good-bye, yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

P.S.—If I find it impossible to stay for longer than a week, could you get some one else to bear you company for the remaining fortnight? Since writing the above I find that aunt and papa have determined to go to Liverpool for a fortnight, and take us all with them. It is stipulated, however, that I should give up the Cleathorpe scheme. I yield reluctantly. But Aunt suggests that you may be able to join us at Liverpool, What do you say? We shall not go for a fortnight or three weeks, because till that time papa's expected assistant will not be ready to undertake his duties.

Letter 55

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

August 4th, 1839.

MY DEAREST ELLEN,—The Liverpool journey is yet a matter of talk, a sort of castle in the air ; but, between you and me, I fancy it is very doubtful whether it will ever assume a more solid shape. Aunt, like many other elderly people, likes to talk of such things ; but when it comes to putting them into practice, she rather falls off. Such being the case, I think you and I had better adhere to our first plan of going somewhere together, independently of other people. I have got leave to accompany you for a week,—at the utmost stretch a fortnight. Where do you wish to go? Burlington, I should think from what Mary Taylor says, would be as eligible a place as any. When do you wish to set off? Arrange all these things according to your own convenience ; I shall start no objections. The idea of seeing the *sea*—of being near it—watching its changes by sunrise, sunset, moonlight, and noonday—in calm, perhaps in storm—fills and satisfies my mind. I shall be discontented at nothing. And then I am not to be with a set of people with whom I have nothing in common,—who would be nuisances and bores ; but with you,

Ellen Nussey, whom I like, and who know and like me. I have an odd circumstance to relate to you—prepare for a hearty laugh! The other day Mr. Hodgson, papa's former curate, now a vicar, came over to spend the day with us, bringing with him his own curate. The latter gentleman, by name, Mr. Bryce, is a young Irish clergyman, fresh from Dublin University. It was the first time we had any of us seen him, but however, after the manner of his countrymen, he soon made himself at home. His character quickly appeared in his conversation: witty, lively, ardent, clever too, but deficient in the dignity and discretion of an Englishman. At home, you know, Ellen, I talk with ease, and am never shy, never weighed down and oppressed by that miserable *mauvaise honte* which torments and constrains me elsewhere. So I conversed with this Irishman and laughed at his jests, and though I saw faults in his character, excused them because of the amusement his originality afforded. I cooled a little, indeed, and drew in towards the latter part of the evening, because he began to season his conversation with something of Hibernian flattery which I did not quite relish. However, they went away, and no more was thought about them. A few days after I got a letter, the direction of which puzzled me, it being in a hand I was not accustomed to see. Evidently, it was neither from you nor Mary Taylor, my only correspondents. Having opened and read it, it proved to be a declaration of attachment and proposal of matrimony, expressed in the ardent language of the sapient young Irishman! Well! thought I, I have heard of love at first sight, but this beats all. I leave you to guess what my answer would be, convinced that you will not do me the injustice of guessing wrong. When we meet I 'll show you the letter. I hope you are laughing heartily. This is not like one of my adventures, is it? It more resembles Martha Taylor's. I am certainly doomed to be an old maid. Never mind, I made up my mind to that fate ever since I was twelve years old. Write soon. C. BRONTË.

Letter 56

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

August 9th, 1839.

MY DEAREST ELLEN, — In the greatest haste I scrawl an answer to your letter—I am very sorry to throw you back in your arrangements, but I really cannot go to-morrow—I could

not get my baggage and myself to Leeds by 10 o'clock to-morrow morning if I was to be hanged for it. You must write again, and fix a day which will give me a little more time for preparation. Haworth, you know, is such an out-of-the-way place, one should have a month's warning before they stir from it. You were very kind to try to get me fetched—but indeed Ellen, it was wrong of you—do you think I could comfortably have accepted so unreasonable a favour? my best plan will certainly be to come to Brookroyd the day before we start. I 'll try to manage it. Good-bye, my dearest Ellen. The Post is just going. Friday morning.

C. B.

Letter 57

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *August* 14*th*, 1839.

I have in vain packed my box, and prepared everything for our anticipated journey. It so happens that I can get no conveyance this week or the next. The only gig let out on hire in Haworth is at Harrogate, and likely to remain there, for aught I can hear. Papa decidedly objects to my going by the coach, and walking to Birstall, though I am sure I could manage it. Aunt exclaims against the weather, and the roads, and the four winds of heaven; so I am in a fix, and, what is worse, so are *you*. On reading over, for the second or third time, your last letter (which, by the bye, was written in such hieroglyphics that, at the first hasty perusal, I could hardly make out two consecutive words), I find you intimate that if I leave this journey till Thursday I shall be too late. I grieve that I should have so inconvenienced you; but I need not talk of either Friday or Saturday now, for I rather imagine there is small chance of my ever going at all. The elders of the house have never cordially acquiesced in the measure; and now that impediments seem to start up at every step opposition grows more open. Papa, indeed, would willingly indulge me, but this very kindness of his makes me doubt whether I ought to draw upon it; so, though I could battle out aunt's discontent, I yield to papa's indulgence. He does not say so, but I know he would rather I stayed at home; and aunt meant well too, I dare say, but I am provoked that she reserved the expression of her decided disapproval till all was settled between you and myself. Reckon on me no more; leave me out in your

calculations: perhaps I ought, in the beginning, to have had prudence sufficient to shut my eyes against such a prospect of pleasure, so as to deny myself the hope of it. Be as angry as you please with me for disappointing you. I did not intend it, and have only one thing more to say—if you do not go immediately to the sea, will you come and see us at Haworth? This invitation is not mine only, but papa's and aunt's. Dear Ellen, do come. If you could come here I would go back with you to Birstall for a few days if you could have me—and your return should be no expense to you. This would be, of course, cheaper than the sea scheme if it would only be as effectual. How is Mr. Taylor? Any better? Good-bye. C. BRONTË.

Letter 58

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *October* 24*th*, 1839.

MY DEAR ELLEN,—You will have concluded by this time that I never got home at all—but evaporated by the way: however, I did get home, and very well too, by the aid of the Dewsbury coachman, though if I had not contrived to make friends with him I don't know how I should have managed. He showed me the way to the inn where the Keighley coach stopped,—carried my box, took my place and saw my luggage put in, and helped me to mount on to the top. I assure you I felt exceedingly obliged to him. I had a long letter from your brother Henry, giving an account of his bride elect. Have you forgot the sea by this time?[1] Is it grown dim in your mind? Or still can you see it,—dark blue, and green, and foam-white; and hear it roaring roughly when the wind is high, or rushing softly when it is calm? How is your health? Have good effects resulted from the change? I am as well as need be, and very fat. I think of Easton very often, and of worthy Mr. Hudson, and his kind-hearted helpmate, and of our pleasant walks to Harlequin Wood, to Boynton; our merry evenings, our romps with little Hancheon, etc., etc. If we both live, this period of our lives will long be a theme of pleasant recollection. Did you chance in your letter to Mrs. Hudson to mention my spectacles? I am sadly inconvenienced by the want of them. I can neither read, write, nor draw with

[1] 'Charlotte sobbed bitterly and was overwhelmed with emotion when she first saw the sea.'—Note by Ellen Nussey.

comfort in their absence. I hope Madame Booth won't refuse to give them up. I wonder when we shall meet again. Have you yet managed to get any definite period for your visit to us? Excuse the brevity of this letter, for I have been drawing all day, and my eyes are so tired it is quite a labour to write. Give my best love to your mother and sister.—Believe me, your old friend,

C. BRONTË.

The above letter reveals a pleasant episode in Charlotte's life: her sojourn with Mr. John Hudson, a farmer at Easton near Bridlington. Little Hancheon was his niece or adopted daughter, Fanny Whipp, then about eight years of age. She married a Mr. North and died in 1866 aged thirty-five. Mr. Hudson died at Bridlington in 1878 and his wife two years earlier. Charlotte had very little acquaintance with children, and we may fairly assume that Fanny Whipp inspired the 'Pauline Mary' of *Villette*.[1]

Miss Ellen Nussey has left us an interesting account of this first visit to the seaside of what was clearly the most glorious September holiday that Charlotte Brontë ever spent.

Ellen Nussey's Narrative.

Charlotte's first visit to the sea-coast deserves a little more notice than her letters give of the circumstances—it was an event eagerly coveted, but hard to attain. Mr. Brontë and Miss Branwell had all manners of doubts and fears and cautions to express, and Charlotte was sinking into despair—there seemed only one chance of securing her the pleasure; her friend must fetch her; this she did through the aid of a dear relative, who sent her to Haworth under safe convey, and in a carriage that would bring both Charlotte and her luggage—this step proved to be the very best thing possible, the surprise was so good in its effects, there was nothing to combat—everybody rose into high good humours, Branwell was grandiloquent, he declared 'it was a brave defeat, that the doubters were fairly taken aback.' You have only to *will* a thing to *get* it, so Charlotte's luggage was speedily prepared, and almost before the horse was rested there was a quiet but

[1] *Transactions of the Brontë Society*, Part IV., Charlotte Brontë and the East Riding.

triumphant starting; the brothers and sisters at home were not less happy than Charlotte herself in her now secured pleasure. It was the first of real freedom to be enjoyed either by herself or her friend, a first experience in railway travelling, which however, only conveyed them through half of the route, the stage-coach making the rest of the journey. Passengers being too numerous for this accommodation, Charlotte and her friend were sent on in an open 'Fly'; the weather was most delightful, the drive was enjoyed immensely, but they were unconsciously hastening on to a disappointment. Friends in the vicinity of the coast whither they were bound had been informed of their coming, and were ready to seize upon them; they met the coach, but it did not bring their expected young friends, and they had to depart, but not without leaving orders at the Hotel where the coach stopped for the capture of the occupants of the 'Fly'; a post-chaise was in readiness, in which they were to be driven off not to the bourne they were longing for (the seaside) but two or three miles away from it, here they were (though most unwilling) hospitably entertained and *detained* for a month. The day but one after their capture they walked to the sea, and as soon as they were near enough for Charlotte to see it in its expanse, she was quite overpowered, she could not speak till she had shed some tears—she signed to her friend to leave her and walk on; this she did for a few steps, knowing full well what Charlotte was passing through, and the stern efforts she was making to subdue her emotions—her friend turned to her as soon as she thought she might without inflicting pain; her eyes were red and swollen, she was still trembling, but submitted to be led onwards where the view was less impressive; for the remainder of the day she was very quiet, subdued, and exhausted. Distant glimpses of the German Ocean had been visible as the two friends neared the coast on the day of their arrival, but Charlotte being without her glasses, could not see them, and when they were described to her, she said, 'Don't tell me any more. Let me wait.' Whenever the sound of the sea reached her ears in the grounds around the house wherein she was a captive guest, her spirit longed to rush away and be close to it. At last their kind and generous entertainers yielded to their wishes and permitted them to take wing and go into lodgings for one week, but still protecting them by every day visits, and bounteous provision from their dairy. What Charlotte and her friend had desired for themselves was, to be their own providers,

believing in their inexperience that they could do great things with the small sum of money they each had at their disposal, but at the end of the week when bills were asked for, they were thoroughly enlightened as to the proprietors of the kind care which had guarded them—they discovered that moderate appetites and modest demands for attendance were of no avail as regarded the demands made upon their small finances. A week's experience sufficed to show them the wisdom of not prolonging their stay, though the realisation of enjoyment had been as intense as anticipation had depicted.

The conventionality of most of the seaside visitors amused Charlotte immensely. The evening Parade on the Pier struck her as the greatest absurdity. It was an old Pier in those days, and of short dimensions, but thither all the visitors seemed to assemble in such numbers, it was like a packed ball-room ; people had to march round and round in regular file to secure any movement whatever. Charlotte and her friend thought they would go away from this after making one essay to do as others did ; they took themselves off to the cliffs to enjoy the moonlight, but they had not done this long, ere some instinct as to safety warned them to return ; on entering their lodgings another novelty impressed itself upon them, they encountered sounds which came from a Ranters' meeting-house across the street, there was violent excitement within its walls, and Charlotte was wild to go in amongst the congregation and see as she said, 'What they were up to'; but was restrained by the reflection that those people who were making such awful noises were acting as they believed on religious impulse, and ought neither to be criticised nor ridiculed in their midst. Charlotte's impressions of the sea never wore off; she would often recall her views of it, and wonder what its aspect would be just at the time she was speaking of it.

Letter 59

TO THE REV. HENRY NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *October 28th*, 1839.

DEAR SIR,—I have delayed answering your last communication in the hopes of receiving a letter from Ellen, that I might be able to transmit to you the latest news from Brookroyd; however, as she does not write, I think I ought to put off my reply no longer

lest you should begin to think me negligent. As you rightly conjecture, I had heard a little hint of what you allude to before, and the account gave me pleasure, coupled as it was with the assurance that the object of your regard is a worthy and estimable woman. The step no doubt will by many of your friends be considered scarcely as a prudent one, *since* fortune is not amongst the number of the young lady's advantages. For my own part, I must confess that I esteem you the more for not hunting after wealth if there be strength of mind, firmness of principle, and sweetness of temper to compensate for the absence of that usually all-powerful attraction. The wife who brings riches to her husband sometimes also brings an idea of her own importance and a tenacity about what she conceives to be her rights, little calculated to produce happiness in the married state. Most probably she will wish to control when nature and affection bind her to submit—in this case there cannot, I should think, be much comfort.

On the other hand, it must be considered that when two persons marry without money, there ought to be moral courage and physical exertion to atone for the deficiency—there should be spirit to scorn dependence, patience to endure privation, and energy to labour for a livelihood. If there be these qualities, I think, with the blessing of God, those who join heart and hand have a right to expect success and a moderate share of happiness, even though they may have departed a step or two from the stern maxims of worldly prudence. The bread earned by honourable toil is sweeter than the bread of idleness; and mutual love and domestic calm are treasures far preferable to the possessions rust can corrupt and moths consume away.

I enjoyed my late excursion with Ellen with the greater zest because such pleasures have not often chanced to fall in my way. I will not tell you what I thought of the sea, because I should fall into my besetting sin of enthusiasm. I may, however, say that its glories, changes, its ebbs and flow, the sound of its restless waves, formed a subject for contemplation that never wearied either the eye, the ear, or the mind. Our visit at Easton was extremely pleasant; I shall always feel grateful to Mr. and Mrs. Hudson for their kindness. We saw Agnes Burton, during our stay, and called on two of your former parishioners—Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Dalton. I was pleased to hear your name mentioned by them in terms of encomium and sincere regard. Ellen will

have detailed to you all the minutia of our excursion ; a recapitulation from me would therefore be tedious. I am happy to say that her health appeared to be greatly improved by the change of air and regular exercise. I am still at home, as I have not yet heard of any situation which meets with the approbation of my friends. I begin, however, to grow exceedingly impatient of a prolonged period of inaction. I feel I ought to be doing something for myself, for my health is now so perfectly re-established by this long rest that it affords me no further pretext for indolence. With every wish for your future welfare, and with the hope that whenever your proposed union takes place it may contribute in the highest sense to your good and happiness,—Believe me, your sincere friend, C. BRONTË.

P.S.—Remember me to your sister Mercy, who, I understand, is for the present your companion and housekeeper.

Letter 60

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

December 21st, 1839.

DEAR ELLEN,—We are at present, and have been during the last month, rather busy, as, for that space of time, we have been without a servant, except a little girl to run errands. Poor Tabby became so lame that she was at length obliged to leave us. She is residing with her sister, in a little house of her own, which she bought with her savings a year or two since. She is very comfortable, and wants nothing ; as she is near we see her very often. In the meantime Emily and I are sufficiently busy, as you may suppose : I manage the ironing, and keep the rooms clean ; Emily does the baking, and attends to the kitchen. We are such odd animals that we prefer this mode of contrivance to having a new face amongst us. Besides, we do not despair of Tabby's return, and she shall not be supplanted by a stranger in her absence. I excited aunt's wrath very much by burning the clothes, the first time I attempted to iron ; but I do better now. Human feelings are queer things ; I am much happier black-leading the stoves making the beds, and sweeping the floors at home than I should be living like a fine lady anywhere else. I must indeed drop my subscription to the Jews, because I have no money to keep it up. I ought to have announced this intention to you before, but I

quite forgot I was a subscriber. I intend to force myself to take another situation when I can get one, though I *hate* and *abhor* the very thoughts of governess-ship. But I must do it; and therefore I heartily wish I could hear of a family where they need such a commodity as a governess.

Good-bye, my dear Ellen; may you have a happy Christmas, and may the next year be pleasanter to you than the last has been. C. BRONTË.

Letter 61

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

January 12th, 1840.

Your letter, which I received this morning, was one of painful interest. Anne Carter it seems, is *dead*; when I saw her last she was a young, beautiful, and happy girl; and now 'life's fitful fever' is over with her, and she 'sleeps well.' I shall never see her again. It is a sorrowful thought; for she was a warm-hearted, affectionate being, and I cared for her. Wherever I seek for her now in this world she cannot be found, no more than a flower or a leaf which withered twenty years ago. A bereavement of this kind gives one a glimpse of the feeling those must have who have seen all drop round them, friend after friend, and are left to end their pilgrimage alone. But tears are fruitless and I try not to repine.

I have not repeated my invitation to you, because aunt has taken it into her head to object to having any visitors during the winter. I did not at first like to tell you of this, but candour is the best plan after all; the matter has weighed on my mind a long while and made me uncomfortable—now that I have fairly written it down I feel far more easy.

I intend to take full advantage of this penny postage,[1] and to write to you often whether I continue at home or 'go out,' that is, as often as I have time. All send their love to you, papa has just been telling me that I am to be sure and say I am much obliged to you for your intimations respecting Mrs. H——. I told him on

[1] This was one of the last letters written by Charlotte Brontë under the old order. It was folded in the usual style before envelopes were adopted, and there was no stamp—only the circular as here reproduced, with post-mark, Bradford, Yorks., Jan. 13, 1840. Postage adhesive stamps were introduced in Jan. 10, 1840, and the uniform penny rate of postage came into operation in the United Kingdom, May 6, 1840.

the contrary, that I should scold you well for their vagueness, and for the very illegible writing in which they were conveyed—in solid truth, Ellen, I believe I was half an hour in making out the letter. Pray write immediately, as Mrs. H—— is daily expecting my reply, and I cannot write till I hear from you.

I shall be sure not to mention your name or anything you may say. I have written to Miss Wooler also for information.—Good-bye, dear Ellen, C. BRONTË.

P.S.—As far as I can judge, the resolution you mention is a right one, and I wish you may be able to carry it into execution. You seem to doubt your own abilities—you need not.

Letter 62

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

January 24th, 1840.

MY DEAR ELLEN,—I have given Mrs. Edward —— her *coup de grâce*—that is to say, I have relinquished the idea of becoming an inmate of her family. I have no doubt she will be very cross with me, especially as when I first declined going she pressed me to take a trial of a month. I am now therefore again adrift, without an object. I am sorry for this, but something may turn up ere long. I know not whether to encourage you in your plan of going out or not; your health seems to me the great obstacle. If you could obtain a situation like Mary Brooke you might do very well. But you could never live in an unruly, violent family of modern children, such, for instance, as those at Blake Hall. Anne is not to return. Mrs. Ingham is a placid, mild woman; but as for the children, it was one struggle of life-wearing exertion to keep them in anything like decent order.

I am miserable when I allow myself to dwell on the necessity of spending my life as a governess. The chief requisite for that station seems to me to be the power of taking things easily as they come, and of making oneself comfortable and at home wherever we may chance to be—qualities in which all our family are singularly deficient. I know I cannot live with a person like Mrs. Sidgwick, but I hope all women are not like her; and my motto is, 'try again.'

Mary Taylor, I am sorry to hear, is ill. Have you seen her, or heard anything of her lately? Sickness seems very general, and

Death, too, at least in this neighbourhood. Mr. Bryce is dead. He had fallen into a state of delicate health for some time, and the rupture of a blood-vessel carried him off. He was a strong, athletic-looking man when I saw him, and that is scarcely six months ago. Though I knew so little of him, and of course could not be deeply or permanently interested in what concerned him, I confess, when I suddenly heard he was dead, I felt both shocked and saddened; it was no shame to feel so, was it? I scold you, Ellen, for writing illegibly and badly, and I think you may repay the compliment with cent. per cent. interest. I am not in the humour for writing a long letter, so good-bye. God bless you.

C. BRONTË.

Letter 63

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

March 17th, 1840.

MY DEAR MRS. ELEANOR,—I wish to scold you with a forty-horse power for having told Mary Taylor that I had requested you not to tell her everything, which piece of information has thrown her into tremendous ill-humour, besides setting the teeth of her curiosity on edge. Tell her forthwith every individual occurrence, including Valentine's, 'Fair Ellen, Fair Ellen,' etc.; 'Away fond love,' etc.; 'Soul divine,' and all; likewise the painting of 'Miss Celia Amelia' Weightman's portrait, and that *young lady's* frequent and agreeable visits. By the bye, I inquired into the opinion of that intelligent and interesting young person respecting you. It was a favourable one. 'She' thought you a fine-looking girl, and a very good girl into the bargain. Have you received the newspaper which has been despatched, containing a notice of 'her' lecture at Keighley? Mr. Morgan came and stayed three days. By Miss Weightman's aid, we got on pretty well. It was amazing to see with what patience and good-temper the innocent creature endured that fat Welshman's prosing, though she confessed afterwards that she was almost done up by his long stories. We feel very dull without you. I wish those three weeks were to come over again. Aunt has been at times precious cross since you went—however, she is rather better now. I had a bad cold on Sunday and stayed at home most of the day. Anne's cold is better, but I don't consider her

strong yet. What did your sister Ann say about my omitting to send a drawing for the Jew basket? I hope she was too much occupied with the thoughts of going to Earnley to think of it. I am obliged to cut short my letter. Everybody in the house unites in sending their love to you. Miss Celia Amelia Weightman also desires to be remembered. Write soon again and—
Believe me, yours unalterably, CHARIVARI.

P.S.—To your hand and Mary Taylor's do I resign myself in the spirit of a martyr, that is to say, with much the same feeling that I should experience if I were sitting down on the plat to have a tooth drawn.

From this next letter it will be seen that the curate-bating which henceforth was to make up a page of Charlotte Brontë's life, had commenced. Mr. Brontë's new curate, William Weightman, is playfully nicknamed 'Celia Amelia,'[1] presumably on account of a certain effeminacy of appearance. Ellen Nussey hints that the young curate is in love with her friend, but the suggestion is repudiated. Emily seems to have had a more tolerant feeling for this young curate than for any one of his successors.

[1] Celia Amelia, Mr. Brontë's curate, a lively, handsome young man fresh from Durham University, an excellent classical scholar. He gave a very good lecture on the Classics at Keighley. The young ladies at the Parsonage must hear his lecture, so he went off to a married clergyman to get him to write to Mr. Brontë and invite the young ladies to tea, and offer his escort to the lecture, and back again to the Parsonage. Great fears were entertained that permission would not be given—it was a walk of four miles each way. The Parsonage was not reached till 12 P.M. The two clergymen rushed in with their charges, deeply disturbing Miss Branwell, who had prepared hot coffee for the home party, which of course fell short when two more were to be supplied. Poor Miss Branwell lost her temper, Charlotte was troubled, and Mr. Weightman, who enjoyed teasing the old lady, was very thirsty. The great spirits of the walking party had a trying suppression, but twinkling fun sustained some of the party.

There was also a little episode as to valentines. Mr. Weightman discovered that none of the party had ever received a valentine—a great discovery! Whereupon he indited verses to each one, and walked ten miles to post them, lest Mr. Brontë should discover his dedicatory nonsense, and the quiet liveliness going on under the sedate espionage of Miss Branwell and Mr. Brontë himself. Then I recall the taking of Mr. Weightman's portrait by Charlotte. The sittings became alarming for length of time required, and the guest had to adopt the gown, which the owner was very proud to exhibit, amusing the party with his critical remarks on the materials used, and pointing out the adornments, silk velvet, etc.—Footnote by Miss Ellen Nussey in the privately printed volume.

Letter 64

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

April 9th, 1840.

MY DEAR MRS. MENELAUS,—I think I am exceedingly good to write to you so soon, indeed I am quite afraid you will begin to consider me intrusive with my frequent letters. I ought by right to let an interval of a quarter of a year elapse between each communication, and I will, in time; never fear me. I shall improve in procrastination as I get older.

My hand is trembling like that of an old man, so I don't expect you will be able to read my writing; never mind, put the letter by and I'll read it to you the next time I see you.

Little Haworth has been all in a bustle about church rates since you were here. We had a most stormy meeting in the schoolroom. Papa took the chair, and Mr. Collins and Mr. Weightman acted as his supporters, one on each side. There was violent opposition, which set Mr. Collins's Irish blood in a ferment, and if papa had not kept him quiet, partly by persuasion and partly by compulsion, he would have given the Dissenters their 'kale through the reek'—a Scotch proverb, which I will explain to you another time. He and Mr. Weightman both bottled up their wrath for that time, but it was only to explode with redoubled force at a future period. We had two sermons on dissent, and its consequences, preached last Sunday—one in the afternoon by Mr. Weightman, and one in the evening by Mr. Collins. All the Dissenters were invited to come and hear, and they actually shut up their chapels and came in a body; of course the church was crowded. Miss Celia Amelia delivered a noble, eloquent, High-Church, Apostolical-Succession discourse, in which he banged the Dissenters most fearlessly and unflinchingly. I thought they had got enough for one while, but it was nothing to the dose that was thrust down their throats in the evening. A keener, cleverer, bolder, and more heart-stirring harangue than that which Mr. Collins delivered from Haworth pulpit, last Sunday evening, I never heard. He did not rant; he did not cant; he did not whine; he did not sniggle; he just got up and spoke with the boldness of a man who was impressed with the truth of what he was saying, who has no fear of his enemies and no dread of consequences. His sermon lasted an hour, yet I was sorry when

it was done. I do not say that I agree either with him or Mr. Weightman, either in all or half their opinions. I consider them bigoted, intolerant, and wholly unjustifiable on the ground of common-sense. My conscience will not let me be either a Puseyite or a Hookist; nay, if I were a Dissenter, I would have taken the first opportunity of kicking or of horsewhipping both the gentlemen for their stern, bitter attack on my religion and its teachers. But in spite of all this, I admired the noble integrity which could dictate so fearless an opposition against so strong an antagonist.

I have been painting a portrait of Agnes Walton, for our friend Miss Celia Amelia. You would laugh to see how his eyes sparkle with delight when he looks at it, like a pretty child pleased with a new plaything. Good-bye to you, let me have no more of your humbug about Cupid, etc. You know as well as I do, it is all groundless trash. Mr. Weightman has given another lecture at the Keighley Mechanics' Institute, and papa has also given a lecture; both are spoken of very highly in the newspaper, and it is mentioned as a matter of wonder that such displays of intellect should emanate from the village of Haworth, situated amongst the bogs and mountains, and, until very lately, supposed to be in a state of semi-barbarism. Such are the words of the newspaper.

C. BRONTË.

At this point we return to Branwell, whose portrait-painting talent has proved unremunerative. All the work by him that we have seen is crude and ineffective. His best-known picture is the family group that has been much reproduced in photography, the portrait of Emily having been separately 'worked up' for an edition of her great novel. The group lacks all but a sentimental value. There is no character in it or quality of any kind. When looked at long years afterwards by those who knew the family, it was averred that it contained a suggestion of likeness, the type in each separate case being recognisable. But as any index to the actual appearance of the three sisters, such as can be obtained from a very moderately competent painting of any individual, it is worthless. Branwell, then, was a failure as an artist, and he had to look out for other work.

An opportunity came in tutorship, and he entered the family of Mr. Postlethwaite of Broughton-in-Furness in January 1840. A few weeks later—on March 13, 1840—he recounted his experiences to the master of the Lodge of the Three Graces at Haworth—a masonic lodge of which Branwell had for a time been secretary in 1837.

Letter 65

Old Knave of Trumps,—Don't think I have forgotten you, though I have delayed so long in writing to you. It was my purpose to send you a yarn as soon as I could find materials to spin one with, and it is only just now that I have had time to turn myself round and know where I am. If you saw me now, you would not know me, and you would laugh to hear the character the people give me. Oh, the falsehood and hypocrisy of this world! I am fixed in a little retired town by the sea-shore, among wild, woody hills that rise round me—huge, rocky, and capped with clouds. My employer is a retired County magistrate, a large landowner, and of a right hearty and generous disposition. His wife is a quiet, silent, and amiable woman, and his sons are two fine, spirited lads. My landlord is a respectable surgeon, two days out of seven is as drunk as a lord! His wife is a bustling, chattering, kind-hearted soul; and his daughter! oh! death and damnation! Well, what am I? That is, what do they think I am? A most calm, sedate, sober, abstemious, patient, mild-hearted, virtuous, gentlemanly philosopher,—the picture of good works, and the treasure-house of righteous thoughts. Cards are shuffled under the table-cloth, glasses are thrust into the cupboard if I enter the room. I take neither spirits, wine, nor malt liquors. I dress in black, and smile like a saint or martyr. Everybody says, 'what a good young gentleman is Mr. Postlethwaite's tutor!' This is a fact, as I am a living soul, and right comfortably do I laugh at them. I mean to continue in their good opinion. I took a half-year's farewell of old friend whisky at Kendal on the night after I left. There was a party of gentlemen at the Royal Hotel, and I joined them. We ordered in supper and whisky-toddy as 'hot as hell!' They thought I was a physician, and put me in the chair. I gave sundry toasts, that were washed down at the same

time, till the room spun round and the candles danced in our eyes. One of the guests was a respectable old gentleman with powdered head, rosy cheeks, fat paunch, and ringed fingers. He gave 'The Ladies,' . . . after which he brayed off with a speech; and in two minutes, in the middle of a grand sentence, he stopped, wiped his head, looked wildly round, stammered, coughed, stopped again, and called for his slippers. The waiter helped him to bed. Next a tall Irish squire and a native of the land of Israel began to quarrel about their countries; and, in the warmth of argument, discharged their glasses, each at his neighbour's throat instead of his own. I recommended bleeding, purging, and blistering; but they administered each other a real 'Jem Warder,' so I flung my tumbler on the floor, too, and swore I'd join 'Old Ireland!' A regular rumpus ensued, but we were tamed at last. I found myself in bed next morning, with a bottle of porter, a glass, and a corkscrew beside me. Since then I have not tasted anything stronger than milk-and-water, nor, I hope, shall, till I return at Midsummer; when we will see about it. I am getting as fat as Prince William at Springhead, and as godly as his friend, Parson Winterbotham. My hand shakes no longer. I ride to the banker's at Ulverston with Mr. Postlethwaite, and sit drinking tea and talking scandal with old ladies. As to the young ones! I have one sitting by me just now—fair-faced, blue-eyed, dark-haired, sweet eighteen—she little thinks the devil is so near her!

I was delighted to see thy note, old squire, but I do not understand one sentence—you will perhaps know what I mean. . . . How are all about you? I long to hear and see them again. How is the 'Devil's Thumb,' whom men call —— ——, and the 'Devil in Mourning,' whom they call —— ——. How are —— ——, and —— ——, and the Doctor; and him who will be used as the tongs of hell—he whose eyes Satan looks out of, as from windows—I mean —— ——, esquire? How are little —— ——, —— 'Longshanks,' —— ——, and the rest of them? Are they married, buried, devilled, and damned? When I come I'll give them a good squeeze of the hand; till then I am too godly for them to think of. That bow-legged devil used to ask me impertinent questions which I answered him in kind. Beelzebub will make of him a walking-stick! Keep to thy teetotalism, old squire, till I return; it will mend thy old body. . . . Does 'Little Nosey' think I have forgotten him? No, by Jupiter! nor his

clock either.[1] I 'll send him a remembrance some of these days! But I must talk to some one prettier than thee; so good-night, old boy, and believe me thine, THE PHILOSOPHER.

Write directly. Of course you won't show this letter; and, for Heaven's sake, blot out all the lines scored with red ink.

This letter[2] is sufficient to explain how it was that Branwell held his position as guide to the two young Postlethwaites only for a few months. He returned to Haworth in June. A letter that he had forwarded to Hartley Coleridge while in Broughton indicates a worthier ambition. The letter has an additional interest because it was addressed to one whose infirmity of purpose was almost as marked as that of Branwell Brontë, and who was destined to die a few months after his correspondent and from much the same cause.[3]

Letter 66

TO HARTLEY COLERIDGE

BROUGHTON-IN-FURNESS,
LANCASHIRE, *April 20th*, 1840.

SIR,—It is with much reluctance that I venture to request, for the perusal of the following lines, a portion of the time of one upon whom I can have no claim, and should not dare to intrude; but I do not, personally, know a man on whom to rely for an answer to the questions I shall put, and I could not resist my longing to ask a man from whose judgment there would be little hope of appeal.

Since my childhood I have been wont to devote the hours I could spare from other and very different employments to efforts at literary composition, always keeping the results to myself, nor

[1] The clock mentioned by Branwell was one that stood in a corner of the 'Snug' at 'The Bull,' inside the door of which the landlord—'Little Nosey'—used to chalk up the 'shots' of his guests.

[2] The letter is reprinted from Leyland's *The Brontë Family*. It may be found in segments in Miss Mary F. Robinson's *Emily Brontë*. It was long in the possession of Mr. William Wood of Haworth, who lent it to Miss Robinson.

[3] Branwell Brontë died September 24th, 1848; Hartley Coleridge on the 6th of January 1849.

have they in more than two or three instances been seen by any other. But I am about to enter active life, and prudence tells me not to waste the time which must make my independence; yet, sir, I like writing too well to fling aside the practice of it without an effort to ascertain whether I could turn it to account, not in *wholly* maintaining myself, but in *aiding* my maintenance, for I do not sigh after fame, and am not ignorant of the folly or the fate of those who, without ability, would depend for their lives upon their pens; but I seek to know, and venture, though with shame, to ask from one whose word I must respect: whether, by periodical or other writing, I could please myself with writing, and make it subservient to living.

I would not, with this view, have troubled you with a composition in verse, but any piece I have in prose would too greatly trespass upon your patience, which, I fear, if you look over the verse, will be more than sufficiently tried.

I feel the egotism of my language, but I have none, sir, in my heart, for I feel beyond all encouragement from myself, and I hope for none from you.

Should you give any opinion upon what I send, it will, however condemnatory, be most gratefully received by,—Sir, your most humble servant, P. B. BRONTË.

P.S.—The first piece is only the sequel of one striving to depict the fall from unguided passion into neglect, despair, and death. It ought to show an hour too near those of pleasure for repentance, and too near death for hope. The translations are two out of many made from Horace, and given to assist an answer to the question—would it be possible to obtain remuneration for translations for such as those from that or any other classic author?

A second letter from Branwell makes it clear that he met Hartley Coleridge at the Lakes:—

Letter 67

TO HARTLEY COLERIDGE

HAWORTH, *June 27th*, 1840.

SIR,—You will, perhaps, have forgotten me, but it will be long before I forget my first conversation with a man of real intellect, in my first visit to the classic lakes of Westmoreland.

During the delightful day which I had the honour of spending with you at Ambleside, I received permission to transmit to you, as soon as finished, the first book of a translation of Horace, in order that, after a glance over it, you might tell me whether it was worth further notice or better fit for the fire.

I have—I fear most negligently, and amid other very different employments—striven to translate two books, the first of which I have presumed to send to you. And will you, sir, stretch your past kindness by telling me whether I should amend and pursue the work or let it rest in peace?

Great corrections I feel it wants, but till I feel that the work might benefit me, I have no heart to make them; yet if your judgment prove in any way favourable, I will re-write the whole, without sparing labour to reach perfection.

I dared not have attempted Horace but that I saw the utter worthlessness of all former translations, and thought that a better one, by whomsoever executed, might meet with some little encouragement. I long to clear up my doubts by the judgment of one whose opinion I should revere, and—but I suppose I am dreaming—one to whom I should be proud indeed to inscribe anything of mine which any publisher would look at, unless, as is likely enough, the work would disgrace the name as much as the name would honour the work.

Amount of remuneration I should not look to—as anything would be everything—and whatever it might be, let me say that my bones would have no rest unless by written agreement a division should be made of the profits (little or much) between myself and him through whom alone I could hope to obtain a hearing with that formidable personage, a London bookseller.

Excuse my unintelligibility, haste, and appearance of presumption, and—Believe me to be, sir, your most humble and grateful servant, P. B. BRONTË.

If anything in this note should displease you, lay it, sir, to the account of inexperience and *not* impudence.

At this time, also, Charlotte was trying to win the verdict of the literary giants of her age. She would seem to have sent Wordsworth the beginnings of a story. He replied, and her answer has been preserved.[1]

[1] In Mrs. Gaskell's *Life*, p. 189-190 of Haworth Edition.

Letter 68

TO WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Authors are generally very tenacious of their productions, but I am not so much attached to this but that I can give it up without much distress. No doubt, if I had gone on, I should have made quite a Richardsonian concern of it. . . . I had materials in my head for half-a-dozen volumes. . . . Of course it is with considerable regret I relinquish any scheme so charming as the one I have sketched. It is very edifying and profitable to create a world out of your own brains, and people it with inhabitants, who are so many Melchisedecs, and have no father nor mother but your own imagination. . . . I am sorry I did not exist fifty or sixty years ago, when the 'Ladies' Magazine' was flourishing like a green bay tree. In that case, I make no doubt, my aspirations after literary fame would have met with due encouragement, and I should have had the pleasure of introducing Messrs. Percy and West into the very best society, and recording all their sayings and doings in double-columned, close-printed pages. . . . I recollect, when I was a child, getting hold of some antiquated volumes, and reading them by stealth with the most exquisite pleasure. You give a correct description of the patient Grisels of those days. My aunt was one of them; and to this day she thinks the tales of the 'Ladies' Magazine' infinitely superior to any trash of modern literature. So do I; for I read them in childhood, and childhood has a very strong faculty of admiration, but a very weak one of criticism. . . . I am pleased that you cannot quite decide whether I am an attorney's clerk or a novel-reading dressmaker. I will not help you at all in the discovery; and as to my handwriting, or the ladylike touches in my style and imagery, you must not draw any conclusion from that—I may employ an amanuensis. Seriously, sir, I am very much obliged to you for your kind and candid letter. I almost wonder you took the trouble to read and notice the novelette of an anonymous scribe, who had not even the manners to tell you whether he was a man or a woman, or whether his 'C. T.' meant Charles Timms or Charlotte Tomkins.

Letter 69

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

April 30th, 1840.

My dear Ellen,—I am not ungrateful for the gift, not unmindful of the giver. I wished before I wrote to finish *my bag* and send it with the letter of thanks for the very pretty Turkish-looking thing you sent me, but I can get no cord and tassels at Keighley, and as I have no opportunity of going elsewhere, I must continue to let it lie by a time longer. I read the letters you sent me with real interest. Amelia's character is indeed developed. I see something in the whole spirit of that letter which makes me thankful you are unlike some of your friends. Fashion, wealth, standing-in-society, seem to be the sole standard for measuring the worth of a character. Amelia thinks she has given up the world, but some of the most absurd notions of that world cling to her like a pestilence. I trust you will ever eschew those doctrines, still keep your truth about you. Amelia has been originally a clever woman, but her judgment has been corrupted. She has utterly lost the power of discriminating character. Her feelings, once perhaps warm, have been weakened and perverted, and heartless ambition has done it all; the wish to rise in the world, to be distinguished by those to whose opinion wealth and fashion have, in her eyes, given great value. Aunt was vastly pleased with the knitting-needle case.

Letter 70

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

May 15th, 1840.

My dear Ellen,—I read your last letter with a great deal of interest. Perhaps it is not always well to tell people when we approve of their actions, and yet it is very pleasant to do so; and as, if you had done wrongly, I hope I should have had honesty enough to tell you so, so now, as you have done rightly, I shall gratify myself by telling you what I think.

If I made you my Father Confessor I could reveal weaknesses which you do not dream of. I do not mean to intimate that I attach a *high value* to empty compliments, but a word of panegyric has often made me feel a sense of confused pleasure which

it required my strongest effort to conceal—and on the other hand, a hasty expression which I could construe into neglect or disapprobation has tortured me till I have lost half a night's rest from its rankling pangs.

Do not be over-persuaded to marry a man you can never respect—I do not say *love*, because, I think, if you can respect a person before marriage, moderate love at least will come after; and as to intense *passion*, I am convinced that that is no desirable feeling. In the first place, it seldom or never meets with a requital; and, in the second place, if it did, the feeling would be only temporary: it would last the honeymoon, and then, perhaps, give place to disgust, or indifference, worse perhaps than disgust. Certainly this would be the case on the man's part; and on the woman's—God help her, if she is left to love passionately and alone.

I am tolerably well convinced that I shall never marry at all. Reason tells me so, and I am not so utterly the slave of feeling but that I can *occasionally hear* her voice.

C. Brontë.

P.S.—Don't talk any more of sending for me—when I come I will *send* myself. All send their love to you. I have no prospect of a situation any more than of going to the moon. Write to me again as soon as you can.

Letter 71

TO THE REV. HENRY NUSSEY

Haworth, *May 26th*, 1840.

Dear Sir,—In looking over my papers this morning I found a letter from you of the date of last February with the mark upon it unanswered Your sister Ellen often accuses me of want of punctuality in answering letters, and I think her accusation is here justified. However, I give you credit for as much considerateness as will induce you to excuse a greater fault than this, especially as I shall hasten directly to repair it.

The fact is, when the letter came Ellen was staying with me, and I was so fully occupied in talking to her that I had no time to think of writing to others. This is no great compliment, but it is no insult either. You know Ellen's worth; you know how seldom I see her, you partly know my regard for her; and from

these premises you may easily draw the inference that her company, when once obtained, is too valuable to be wasted for a moment. One woman can appreciate the value of another better than a man can do. Men very often only see the outside gloss which dazzles in prosperity, women have opportunities for closer observation, and they learn to value those qualities which are useful in adversity.

There is much, too, in that mild even temper and that placid equanimity which keep the domestic hearth always bright and peaceful—this is better than the ardent nature that changes twenty times a day. I have studied Ellen and I think she would make a good wife—that is, if she had a good husband. If she married a fool or a tyrant there is spirit enough in her composition to withstand the dictates of either insolence or weakness, though even then I doubt not her sense would teach her to make the best of a bad bargain.

You will see my letters are all didactic. They contain no news, because I know of none which I think it would interest you to hear repeated. I am still at home, in very good health and spirits, and uneasy only because I cannot yet hear of a situation.

I shall always be glad to have a letter from you, and I promise when you write again to be less dilatory in answering. I trust your prospects of happiness still continue fair; and from what you say of your future partner I doubt not she will be one who will help you to get cheerfully through the difficulties of this world and to obtain a permanent rest in the next; at least I hope such may be the case. You do right to conduct the matter with due deliberation, for on the step you are about to take depends the happiness of your whole lifetime.

You must not again ask me to write in a regular literary way to you on some particular topic. I cannot do it at all. Do you think I am a blue-stocking? I feel half inclined to laugh at you for the idea, but perhaps you would be angry. What was the topic to be? Chemistry? or astronomy? or mechanics? or conchology? or entomology? or what other ology? I know nothing at all about any of these. I am not scientific; I am not a linguist. You think me far more learned than I am. If I told you all my ignorance, I am afraid you would be shocked; however, as I wish still to retain a little corner in your good opinion, I will hold my tongue.—Believe me, yours respectfully,

C. BRONTË.

Letter 72

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

June 2nd, 1840.

MY DEAR ELLEN,—Mary Taylor is not yet come to Haworth; but she is to come, on the condition that I first go and stay a few days there. If all be well, I shall go next Wednesday. I may stay at Gomersall until Friday or Saturday, and the early part of the following week I shall pass with you, if you will have me—which last sentence indeed is nonsense, for as I should be glad to see you, so I know you will be glad to see me. This arrangement will not allow much time, but it is the only practical one which, considering the circumstances, I can effect. Do not urge me to stay more than two or three days, because I shall be obliged to refuse you. I intend to walk to Keighley, then to take the coach as far as Bradford, then to get some one to carry my box, and to walk the rest of the way to Gomersall. If I manage this I think I shall contrive very well. I shall reach Bradford by about 5 o'clock, and then I shall have the cool of the evening for the walk. I have communicated the whole of the arrangements to Mary. I desire exceedingly to see both her and you. Good-bye.

If you have any better plan to suggest I am open to conviction, provided your plan is practical. C. B.

C. B.

C. B.

C. B.

Letter 73

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

July 14th, 1840.

MY DEAR ELLEN,—Will you be so kind as to deliver the enclosed to Martha Taylor—do not go up to Gomersall on purpose with it, do not on any account send, but give it her yourself when you see her at church. You will think it extraordinary that I should send a letter to Martha under a cover addressed to you. I have a reason for so doing of course, but it is not my own reason, and therefore I do not think I have any right to communicate it. Martha will, of course, please herself. Do not suppose from this apparent mystery that there is anything

of importance in the business; it is, I assure you, the veriest trifle—but trifles are sometimes magnified into matters of consequence.

I am very glad you continue so heart-whole. I rather feared our mutual nonsense might have made a deeper impression on you than was safe. Mr. Weightman left Haworth this morning; we do not expect him back again for some weeks. I am fully convinced, Ellen, that he is a thorough male-flirt; his sighs are deeper than ever, and his treading on toes more assiduous. I find he has scattered his impressions far and wide. Keighley has yielded him a fruitful field of conquest. Sarah Sugden is quite smitten, so is Caroline Dury. She, however, has left, and his Reverence has not yet ceased to idolise her memory. I find he is perfectly conscious of his irresistibleness, and is as vain as a peacock on the subject. I am not at all surprised at all this; it is perfectly natural; a handsome, clever, prepossessing, good-humoured young man will never want troops of victims amongst young ladies—so long as you are not among the number it is all right. He has not mentioned you to me, and I have not mentioned you to him. I believe we fully understand each other on the subject. I have seen little of him lately, and talked precious little to him; and when he was lonely and rather melancholy I had a great pleasure in cheering and amusing him. Now that he has got his spirits up and found plenty of acquaintances, I don't care, and he does not care either.

I have no doubt he will get nobly through his examinations; he is a *clever* lad.

Letter 74

MISS ELLEN NUSSEY

August 14*th*, 1840.

My dear Ellen,—As you only sent me a note I shall only send you one, and that not out of revenge, but because, like you, I have but little to say. The freshest news in our house is that we had about a fortnight ago a visit from some of our South of England relations—John Branwell Williams and his wife and daughter. They have been staying about a month with Uncle Fennell at Crosstone. They reckon to be very grand folks indeed, and talk largely—I thought assumingly. I cannot say I much admired them; to my eyes there seemed to be an attempt

to play the great Mogul down in Yorkshire. Mr. Williams himself was much less assuming than the womenites; he seemed a frank, sagacious kind of man, very tall and vigorous, with a keen, active look. The moment he saw me he explained that I was the very image of my aunt Charlotte. Mrs. Williams sets up for being a woman of great talents, tact, and accomplishment; I thought there was more noise than work. My cousin Eliza is a young lady intended by Nature to be a bouncing, good-looking girl; Art has trained her to be a languishing, affected piece of goods. I would have been friendly to her, but I could get no talk except about the Low Church Evangelical Clergy, the Millennium, Baptist Noel, botany, and her own conversion. A mistaken education has utterly spoiled the lass; her face tells that she is naturally good-natured, though perhaps indolent; in manner she is something of a sanctified Amelia Ringrose, affecting at times a saintly, childlike innocence so utterly out of keeping with her round rosy face and tall bouncing figure that I could hardly refrain from laughing as I watched her. Write a long letter to me next time, and I 'll write you ditto. Good-bye.

Letter 75

TO MISS ELLEN NUSSEY

August 20th, 1840.

DEAR MRS. ELLEN,—I was very well pleased with your capital long letter. A better farce than the whole affair of that letter-opening (ducks and Mr. Weightman included)[1] was never imagined. By the bye, speaking of Mr. Weightman, I told you he was gone to pass his examination at Ripon six weeks ago. He is not come back yet, and what has become of him we don't know. Branwell has received one letter since he went, speaking rapturously of Agnes Walton, describing certain balls at which he had figured, and announcing that he had been twice over head and ears desperately in love. It is my devout belief that his reverence left Haworth with the fixed intention of never returning. If he does return, it will be because he has not been able to get a 'living.' Haworth is not the place for him. He requires novelty, a change of faces, difficulties to be overcome. He pleases so easily that he soon gets weary of pleasing at all. He ought not to have been a

[1] The curate had sent Ellen Nussey a present of ducks.

parson; certainly he ought not. I told Branwell all you said in your last; he said little, but laughed. The name you gave him was Tastril. I am glad you have not broken your heart because John B. is married. Our *august* relations, as you choose to call them, are gone back to London. They never stayed with us, they only spent one day at our house. I hope George will be better soon; did Mr. Heald accompany him to Scotland? Have you seen anything of the Miss Woolers lately? I wish they, or somebody else, would get me a situation. I have answered advertisements without number, but my applications have met with no success. I have got another bale of French books from Gomersall, containing upwards of forty volumes. I have read about half. They are like the rest, clever, sophistical, and immoral. The best of it is, they give one a thorough idea of France and Paris, and are the best substitute for French conversation that I have met with.

I positively have nothing more to say to you, for I am in a stupid humour. You must excuse this letter not being quite as long as your own. I have written to you soon, that you might not look after the postman in vain. Preserve this writing as a curiosity in caligraphy—I think it is exquisite—all brilliant black blots and utterly illegible letters. CALIBAN.

Letter 76

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

September 29th, 1840.

'The wind bloweth where it listeth. Thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth.' That, I believe, is Scripture, though in what chapter or book, or whether it be correctly quoted, I can't justly say. However, it behoves me to write a letter to a young woman of the name of Ellen Nussey, with whom I was once acquainted, 'in life's morning march, when my spirit was young.' This young woman asked me to write to her some time since, though having nothing to say, I e'en put it off, day by day, till at last, fearing that she will 'curse me by her gods,' I feel constrained to sit down and tack a few lines together, which she may call a letter or not as she pleases. Now, if the young woman expects sense in this production, she will find herself miserably disappointed. I shall

dress her a dish of salmagundi, I shall cook a hash, compound a stew, toss up an omelette soufflée à la Française, and send it to her with my respects. The wind, which is very high up in our hills of Judea, though, I suppose, down in the Philistine flats of Batley parish it is nothing to speak of, has produced the same effects on the contents of my knowledge-box that a quaigh of usquebaugh does upon those of most other bipeds. I see everything *couleur de rose*, and am strongly inclined to dance a jig, if I knew how. I think I must partake of the nature of a pig or an ass—both which animals are strongly affected by a high wind. From what quarter the wind blows I cannot tell, for I never could in my life; but I should very much like to know how the great brewing tub of Bridlington Bay works, and what sort of yeasty froth rises just now on the waves.

A woman of the name of Mrs. Brooke, it seems, wants a teacher. I wish she would have me; and I have written to another woman denominated Peg Wooler, to tell her so. Verily, it is a delightful thing to live here at home, at full liberty to do just what one pleases. But I recollect some fable or other about grasshoppers and ants by a scrubby old knave, yclept Æsop; the grasshoppers sung all the summer and starved all the winter.

A distant relation of mine, one Patrick Boanerges, has set off to seek his fortune in the wild, wandering, adventurous, romantic, knight-errant-like capacity of clerk on the Leeds and Manchester Railroad. Leeds and Manchester, where are they? Cities in a wilderness—like Tadmor, alias Palmyra—are they not? I know Mrs. Ellen is burning with eagerness to hear something about Wm. Weightman, whom she adores in her heart, and whose image she cannot efface from her memory. I think I'll plague her by not telling her a word. To speak Heaven's truth, I have precious little to say, inasmuch as I seldom see him, except on a Sunday, when he looks as handsome, cheery, and good-tempered as usual. I have indeed had the advantage of one long conversation since his return from Westmoreland, when he poured out his whole, warm, fickle soul in fondness and admiration of Agnes Walton. Whether he is in love with her or not I can't say; I can only observe that it sounds very like it. He sent us a prodigious quantity of game while he was away. A brace of wild ducks, a brace of black grouse, a brace of partridges, ditto of snipes, ditto of curlews, and a large salmon. There is one little trait respecting him which lately came to my knowledge, which

gives a glimpse of the better side of his character. Last Saturday night he had been sitting an hour in the parlour with papa; and, as he went away, I heard papa say to him—'What is the matter with you? You seem in very low spirits to-night?' 'Oh, I don't know. I've been to see a poor young girl, who, I'm afraid, is dying.' 'Indeed, what is her name?' 'Susan Bland, the daughter of John Bland, the Superintendent.' Now Susan Bland is my oldest and best scholar in the Sunday-school; and, when I heard that, I thought I would go as soon as I could to see her. I did go on Monday afternoon, and found her very ill and weak, and seemingly far on her way to that bourne whence no traveller returns. After sitting with her some time, I happened to ask her mother if she thought a little port wine would do her good. She replied that the doctor had recommended it, and that when Mr. Weightman was last there he had sent them a bottle of wine and a jar of preserves. She added that he was always good to poor folks, and seemed to have a deal of feeling and kind-heartedness about him. This proves that he is not all selfishness and vanity. No doubt there are defects in his character, but there are also good qualities. God bless him! I wonder who, with his advantages, would be without his faults. I know many of his faulty actions, many of his weak points; yet, where I am, he shall always find rather a defender than an accuser. To be sure, my opinion will go but a very little way to decide his character; what of that? People should do right as far as their ability extends. You are not to suppose from all this that Mr. Weightman and I are on very amiable terms; we are not at all. We are cold, distant, and reserved. We seldom speak; and when we do, it is only to exchange the most commonplace remarks. If you were to ask Mr. Weightman's opinion of my character just now, he would say that at first he thought me a cheerful, chatty kind of body, and that on further acquaintance he found me of a capricious, changeful temper, never to be reckoned on. He does not know that I have regulated my manner by his, that I was cheerful and chatty so long as he was respectful, and that when he grew almost contemptuously familiar I found it necessary to adopt a degree of reserve which was not natural, and therefore was very painful to me. I find this reserve very convenient, and consequently I intend to keep it up.

Branwell, it will be seen, was at Mr. Postlethwaite's

from January to June 1840. He obtained his post as a booking clerk at Sowerby Bridge in September 1840, and was here until his transfer in 1841 to the station at Luddenden Foot. There he remained twelve months.

Letter 77

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

November 12th, 1840.

MY DEAR NELL,—You will excuse this scrawled sheet of paper, inasmuch as I happen to be out of that article, this being the only available sheet I can find in my desk. I have effaced one of the delectable portraitures, but have spared the others—lead pencil sketches of horse's head, and man's head—being moved to that act of clemency by the recollection that they are not the work of my hand, but of the sacred fingers of his reverence William Weightman. You will discern that the eye is a little too elevated in the horse's head, otherwise I can assure you it is no such bad attempt. It shows taste and something of an artist's eye. The fellow had no copy for it. He sketched it, and one or two other little things, when he happened to be here one evening, but you should have seen the vanity with which he afterwards regarded his productions. One of them represented the flying figure of Fame inscribing his own name on the clouds.

Mrs. Brooke and I have interchanged letters. She expressed herself pleased with the style of my application—with its candour, etc. (I took care to tell her that if she wanted a showy, elegant, fashionable personage, I was not the man for her), but she wants music and singing. I can't give her music and singing, so of course the negotiation is null and void. Being once up, however, I don't mean to sit down till I have got what I want; but there is no sense in talking about unfinished projects, so we'll drop the subject. Consider this last sentence a hint from me to be applied practically. It seems Miss Wooler's school is in a consumptive state of health. I have been endeavouring to obtain a reinforcement of pupils for her, but I cannot succeed, because Mrs. Heap is opening a new school in Bradford.

You remember Mr. and Mrs. C——? Mrs. C—— came here the other day, with a most melancholy tale of her wretched husband's drunken, extravagant, profligate habits. She asked papa's advice;

there was nothing, she said, but ruin before them. They owed debts which they could never pay. She expected Mr. C——'s instant dismissal from his curacy; she knew, from bitter experience, that his vices were utterly hopeless. He treated her and her child savagely ; with much more to the same effect. Papa advised her to leave him for ever, and go home, if she had a home to go to. She said this was what she had long resolved to do; and she would leave him directly, as soon as Mr. B. dismissed him. She expressed great disgust and contempt towards him, and did not affect to have the shadow of regard in any way. I do not wonder at this, but I *do* wonder she should ever marry a man towards whom her feelings must always have been pretty much the same as they are now. I am morally certain no decent woman could experience anything but aversion towards such a man as Mr. C——. Before I knew or suspected his character, and when I rather wondered at his versatile talents, I felt it in an uncontrollable degree. I hated to talk with him—hated to look at him ; though, as I was not certain that there was substantial reason for such a dislike, and thought it absurd to trust to mere instinct, I both concealed and repressed the feeling as much as I could; and, on all occasions, treated him with as much civility as I was mistress of. I was struck with Mary's expression of a similar feeling at first sight; she said, when we left him, 'That is a hideous man, Charlotte!' I thought, 'He is indeed.' In what precise way he has committed himself in Ireland I know not, but Mrs. C—— says he dare not follow her there.

This is a very disagreeable letter on account of the subject, and you must necessarily owe me a grudge for writing such a one; but never mind, I 'll send you a better one another time (if all is well).

C. BRONTË.

Letter 78

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

November 20th, 1840.

MY DEAREST NELL,—That last letter of thine treated of matters so high and important I cannot delay answering it for a day. Now I am about to write thee a discourse, and a piece of advice which thou must take as if it came from thy grandmother. But in the first place, before I begin with thee, I have

a word to whisper in the ear of Mr. Vincent, and I wish it could reach him.

In the name of St. Chrysostom, St. Simon, and St. Jude, why does not that amiable young gentleman come forward like a man and say all that he has to say personally, instead of trifling with kinsmen and kinswomen. 'Mr. Vincent,' I say, 'walk or ride over to Brookroyd some fine morning, when you will find Miss Ellen sitting in the drawing-room making a little white frock for the Jew's basket, and say: "Miss Ellen, I want to speak to you." Miss Ellen will of course civilly answer: "I am at your service, Mr. Vincent." And then, when the room is cleared of all but *yourself and herself*, just take a chair near her, insist upon her laying down that silly Jew basket-work, and listening to *you*. Then begin, in a clear, distinct, deferential, but determined voice: "Miss Ellen, I have a question to put to you—a very important question to put to you: 'Will you take me as your husband, for better, for worse? I am not a rich man, but I have sufficient to support us. I am not a great man, but I love you honestly and truly. Miss Ellen, if you knew the world better you would see that this is an offer not to be despised—a kind attached heart and a moderate competency.'" Do this, Mr. Vincent, and you may succeed. Go on writing sentimental and love-sick letters to Henry and I would not give sixpence for your suit.'

So much for Mr. Vincent. Now, Nell, your turn comes to swallow the black bolus, called a friend's advice. Here I am under difficulties because I don't know Mr. Vincent. If I did, I would give my opinion roundly in two words. 'Is the man a fool? is he a knave? a humbug, a hypocrite, a ninny, a noodle? If he is any or all of these, of course there is no sense in trifling with him. Cut him short at once—blast his hopes with lightning rapidity and keenness. Is he something better than this? has he at least common-sense, a good disposition, a manageable temper? Then, Nell, consider the matter.' Say further: 'You feel a disgust towards him now—an utter repugnance. Very likely. But be so good as to remember you don't know him; you have only had three or four days' acquaintance with him. Longer and closer intimacy might reconcile you to a wonderful extent. And now I'll tell you a word of truth, at which you may be offended or not as you like.' Say to her: 'From what I know of your character, and I think I know it pretty well, I should say you will *never love before marriage*. After that ceremony is over, and after you have had

some months to settle down, and to get accustomed to the creature you have taken for your worse half, you will probably make a most affectionate and happy wife; even if the individual should not prove *all* you could wish—you will be indulgent towards his little follies and foibles, and will not feel much annoyance at them. This will especially be the case if he should have sense sufficient to allow you to guide him in important matters.' Say also: 'I hope you will not have the romantic folly to wait for what the French call "une grande passion." My good girl, "une grande passion" is "une grande folie." I have told you so before and I tell it you again, moderation in all things is wisdom; moderation in the sensations is superlative wisdom. When you are as old as I am, Nell (I am sixty at least, being your grandmother), you will find that the majority of those worldly precepts, whose seeming coldness shocks and repels us in youth, are founded in wisdom.'

Did you not once say to me in all childlike simplicity, 'I thought, Charlotte, no young lady should fall in love till the offer was actually made?' I forget what answer I made at the time, but I now reply, after due consideration, Right as a glove, the maxim is just, and I hope you will always attend to it. I will even extend and confirm it: No young lady should fall in love till the offer has been made, accepted, the marriage ceremony performed, and the first half-year of wedded life has passed away. A woman may then begin to love, but with great precaution, very coolly, very moderately, very rationally. If she ever loves so much that a harsh word or a cold look cuts her to the heart she is a fool. If she ever loves so much that her husband's will is her law, and that she has got into a habit of watching his looks in order that she may anticipate his wishes, she will soon be a neglected fool. Did I not once tell you of an instance of a relative of mine who cared for a young lady until he began to suspect that she cared more for him and then instantly conceived a sort of contempt for her? You know to whom I allude—never, as you value your ears, mention the circumstance—but I have two studies, *you* are my study for the success, the credit, and the respectability of a quiet, tranquil character. Mary is my study for the contempt, the remorse, the misconstruction which follow the development of feelings in themselves noble, warm, generous, devoted, and profound; but which being too freely revealed, too frankly bestowed, are not estimated at their real value. God bless her.

I never hope to see in this world a character more truly noble; she would *die* willingly for one she loved; her intellect and her attainments are of the highest standard. Yet I doubt whether Mary will ever marry.

I think I may as well conclude the letter, for after all I can give you no advice worth receiving; all I have to say may be comprised in a very brief sentence. On one hand, don't accept if you are *certain* you cannot *tolerate* the man; on the other hand, don't refuse because you cannot *adore* him. As to little William Weightman, I think he will not die for love of anybody; you might safely coquette with him a trifle if you were so disposed, without fear of having a broken heart on your conscience. His reverence expresses himself very strongly on the subject of young ladies saying 'No' when they mean 'Yes.' He assures me he means nothing personal. I hope not. I tried to find something admirable in him and failed.

Assuredly I quite agree with him in his disapprobation of such a senseless course. It is folly indeed for the tongue to stammer a negative, when the heart is proclaiming an affirmative. Or rather, it is an act of heroic self-denial of which I for one confess myself wholly incapable. *I would not tell such a lie* to gain a thousand pounds. Write to me again soon and let me know how all goes on. What made you say I admired Hippocrates? It is a confounded 'fib.' I tried to find something in him and failed.

Ellen, Helen, Eleonora, Helena, Nell, Nelly—Mrs. Vincent. Does it sound well, Nell? I think it does. I'll never come to see you after you are married.

Letter 79

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

January 3rd, 1841.

My dear Ellen,— I received the news in your last with no surprise, and with the feeling that this removal must be a relief to Mr. Taylor himself and even to his family. The bitterness of death was past a year ago, when it was first discovered that his illness must terminate fatally; all between has been lingering suspense. This is at an end now, and the present certainty, however sad, is better than the former doubt. What will be the consequence of his death is another question; for my own part,

I look forward to a dissolution and dispersion of the family, perhaps not immediately, but in the course of a year or two. It is true, causes may arise to keep them together awhile longer, but they are restless, active spirits, and will not be restrained always. Mary alone has more energy and power in her nature than any ten men you can pick out in the united parishes of Birstall and Gomersall. It is vain to limit a character like hers within ordinary boundaries—she will overstep them. I am morally certain Mary will establish her own landmarks, so will the rest of them. C. BRONTË.

Letter 80

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

January 10th, 1841.

MY DEAR ELLEN,—I promised to write to you, and therefore I must keep my promise, though I have neither much to say nor much time to say it in.

Mary Taylor's visit has been a very pleasant one to us, and I believe to herself also. She and Mr. Weightman have had several games at chess, which generally terminated in a species of mock hostility. Mr. Weightman is better in health; but don't set your heart on him, I'm afraid he is very fickle—not to you in particular, but to half-a-dozen other ladies. He has just cut his *inamorata* at Swansea, and sent her back all her letters. His present object of devotion is Caroline Dury, to whom he has just despatched a most passionate copy of verses. Poor lad, his sanguine temperament bothers him grievously.

That Swansea affair seems to me somewhat heartless as far as I can understand it, though I have not heard a very clear explanation. He sighs as much as ever. I have not mentioned your name to him yet, nor do I mean to do so until I have a fair opportunity of gathering his real mind. Perhaps I may never mention it at all, but on the contrary carefully avoid all allusion to you. It will just depend upon the further opinion I may form of his character. I am not pleased to find that he was carrying on a regular correspondence with this lady at Swansea all the time he was paying such pointed attention to you; and now the abrupt way in which he has cut her off, and the evident wandering instability of his mind is no favourable symptom at all. I shall not have many opportunities of observing him for a month to come.

As for the next fortnight, he will be sedulously engaged in preparing for his ordination, and the fortnight after he will spend at Appleby and Crackenthorp with Mr. and Miss Walton. Don't think about him; I am not afraid you will break your heart, but don't think about him.

Give my love to Mercy and your mother, and,—Believe me, yours sincerely, ÇA IRA.

Letter 81

TO THE REV. H. NUSSEY, EARNLEY RECTORY, NR. CHICHESTER

January 11*th*, 1841.

DEAR SIR,—It is time I should reply to your last or I shall fail in fulfilling my promise of not being so dilatory as on a former occasion. I think I told you I had heard something of Mr. Vincent's affair before, but I thought from the long interval that had elapsed between his visit to Brookroyd and his late declaration that some impediment had occurred to prevent his proceeding further. I own I am glad to hear that this is not the case, for I know few things that would please me better than to hear of Ellen's being *well* married. This little adverb *well* is, however, a condition of importance; it implies a great deal—fitness of character, temper, pursuits, and competency of fortune. Your description of Mr. Vincent seems to promise all these things; there is but one word in it that appears exceptionable—you say he is *eccentric.* If his eccentricity is not of a degrading or ridiculous character, if it does not arise from weakness of mind, I think Ellen would hardly be justified in considering it a serious objection; but there is a species of eccentricity which, showing itself in silly and trifling forms, often exposes its possessor to ridicule—this, as it must necessarily weaken a wife's respect for her husband, may be a great evil. I have advised Ellen as strongly as my limited knowledge of the business gives me a right to do, to accept Mr. Vincent in case he should make decided proposals. In consequence of this advice she seems to suspect that I have had some hand in helping 'to cook a certain hash which has been concocted at Earnley.' I use her own words which I cannot interpret, for I do not comprehend them—you can clear me of any such underhand and meddling dealings. What I have had to say on the subject has been said entirely to herself, and it

amounted simply to this: 'If Mr. Vincent is a good, honourable, and respectable man, take him, even though you should not at present feel any violent affection for him; the folly of what the French call "une grande passion" is not consistent with your tranquil character—do not therefore wait for such a feeling. If Mr. Vincent be sensible and good-tempered, I do not doubt that in a little while you would find yourself very happy and comfortable as his wife.'

You will see by these words that I am no advocate for the false modesty which you complain of, and which induces some young ladies to say 'No' when they mean 'Yes'; but if I know Ellen, she is not one of this class—she ought not therefore to be too closely urged. Let her friends state their opinion and give their advice, and leave it to her own sense of right and reason to do the rest. It seems to us better that she should be married—but if *she* thinks otherwise, perhaps she is the best judge. We know many evils are escaped by eschewing matrimony, and since so large a proportion of the young ladies of these days pursue that rainbow-shade with such unremitting eagerness, let us respect one exception who turns aside and pronounces it only a coloured vapour whose tints will fade on a close approach.

I shall be glad to receive the poetry which you offer to send me; you ask me to return the gift in kind. How do you know that I have it in my power to comply with that request? Once indeed, I was very poetical, when I was sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, and nineteen years old, but I am now twenty-four, approaching twenty-five, and the intermediate years are those which begin to rob life of some of its superfluous colouring. At this age it is time that the imagination should be pruned and trimmed—that the judgment should be cultivated, and a *few*, at least, of the countless illusions of early youth should be cleared away. I have not written poetry for a long while.

You will excuse the dulness, morality, and monotony of this epistle, and believe me, with all good wishes for your welfare here and hereafter,—Your sincere friend, C. BRONTË.

CHAPTER X

UPPERWOOD HOUSE, RAWDON—MARCH TO DECEMBER 1841

Rawdon is still a village, six miles from Bradford, consisting largely of the residences of wealthy Bradford merchants. Woodhouse Grove School, where the Rev. John Fennell was headmaster, is very near by. Upperwood House, where Charlotte Brontë was governess for a few months in 1841, no longer exists; some years ago it was pulled down, and the gardens contributed to add further glories to the neighbouring residence of Ashfield.

Rawdon has yet another interest in addition to the fact of Charlotte Brontë's brief governess-ship to the children of Mr. John White. Five years later Mr. William Edward Forster took a residence which is known as Lane Head, Rawdon, and several letters in his biography are dated from here at this period.[1]

Perhaps the most interesting point of Forster's residence here was the visit to him of Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle in the summer of 1847 and of the constant visits to him at Rawdon of Mr. Richard Monckton Milnes, who became Lord Houghton. A story is told by Sir Wemyss Reid of Forster driving Mrs. Carlyle, when both were thrown out of the gig.

Of Charlotte Brontë's sojourn at Upperwood House, Rawdon, I can find only one slight record apart from her

[1] See *The Life of the Rt. Hon. William Edward Forster*, by T. Wemyss Reid. 2 vols. (Chapman and Hall, 1888.) Vol. I., Chapter 7.

letters. It is contained in a communication to the *Westminster Gazette.* The writer says :—

My mother, Mrs. Glade of Hastings, now in her seventy-ninth year, distinctly remembers meeting the afterwards distinguished authoress at the house of Mr. White, a Bradford merchant . . . something like sixty years ago. At that time Miss Brontë was acting as governess to Mr. White's children, and my mother has a vivid recollection of seeing her sitting apart from the rest of the family in a corner of the room, poring, in her short-sighted way, over a book. The impression she made on my mother was that of a shy nervous girl, ill at ease, who desired to escape notice and to avoid taking part in the general conversation.[1]

Letter 82

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

March 3rd, 1841.

I told you some time since that I meant to get a situation, and when I said so my resolution was quite fixed. I felt that, however often I was disappointed, I had no intention of relinquishing my efforts. After being severely baffled two or three times—after a world of trouble, in the way of correspondence and interviews—I have at length succeeded, and am fairly established in my new place. It is in the family of Mr. White of Upperwood House, Rawdon.

The house is not very large, but exceedingly comfortable and well regulated ; the grounds are fine and extensive. In taking the place I have made a large sacrifice in the way of salary, in the hope of securing comfort—by which word I do not mean to express good eating and drinking, or warm fire, or a soft bed, but the society of cheerful faces, and minds and hearts not dug out of a lead mine, or cut from a marble quarry. My salary is not really more than £16 per annum, though it is nominally £20, but the expense of washing will be deducted therefrom. My pupils are two in number, a girl of eight and a boy of six. As to my employers, you will not expect me to say much about their characters when I tell you that I only arrived here yesterday. I have not the faculty of telling an individual's disposition at

[1] Mr. Strickland of Halsteads, Hastings, in *The Westminster Gazette,* May 1901.

first sight. Before I can venture to pronounce on a character I must see it first under various lights and from various points of view. All I can say, therefore, is, both Mr. and Mrs. White seem to me good sort of people. I have as yet had no cause to complain of want of considerateness or civility. My pupils are wild and unbroken, but apparently well disposed. I wish I may be able to say as much next time I write to you. My earnest wish and endeavour will be to please them. If I can but feel that I am giving satisfaction, and if at the same time I can keep my health, I shall, I hope, be moderately happy. But no one but myself can tell how hard a governess's work is to me —for no one but myself is aware how utterly averse my whole mind and nature are to the employment. Do not think that I fail to blame myself for this, or that I leave any means unemployed to conquer this feeling. Some of my greatest difficulties lie in things that would appear to you comparatively trivial. I find it so hard to repel the rude familiarity of children. I find it so difficult to ask either servants or mistress for anything I want, however much I want it. It is less pain to me to endure the greatest inconvenience than to request its removal. I am a fool. Heaven knows I cannot help it!

Now can you tell me whether it is considered improper for governesses to ask their friends to come and see them. I do not mean, of course, to stay, but just for a call of an hour or two? If it is not absolute treason, I do fervently request that you will contrive, in some way or other, to let me have a sight of your face. Yet I feel at the same time, that I am making a very foolish and almost impracticable demand; yet Rawdon is only nine miles from Brookroyd.

I dare say you have received a valentine this year from our bonny-faced friend the curate of Haworth.[1] I got a precious

[1] Valentines were of course very much the vogue in those days, and one sent by Charlotte Brontë to a clergyman of a neighbouring parish was religiously preserved by his family and printed a few years ago in the *Whitehaven News*:—

A Roland for your Oliver
We think you've justly earned;
You sent us such a valentine,
Your gift is now returned.

We cannot write or talk like you;
We're plain folks every one;
You've played a clever jest on us,
We thank you for the fun.

specimen a few days before I left home, but I knew better how to treat it than I did those we received a year ago. I am up to the dodges and artifices of his lordship's character. He knows I know him, and you cannot conceive how quiet and respectful he has long been. Mind I am not writing against him—I never *will* do that. I like him very much. I honour and admire his generous, open disposition, and sweet temper—but for all the

Believe us when we frankly say
  (Our words, though blunt, are true),
At home, abroad, by night or day,
  We all wish well to you.

And never may a cloud come o'er
  The sunshine of your mind ;
Kind friends, warm hearts, and happy hours
  Through life we trust you 'll find.

Where'er you go, however far
  In future years you stray,
There shall not want our earnest prayer
  To speed you on your way.

A stranger and a pilgrim here
  We know you sojourn now ;
But brighter hopes, with brighter wreaths,
  Are doomed to bind your brow.

Not always in these lonely hills
  Your humble lot shall lie ;
The oracle of fate fortells
  A worthier destiny.

And though her words are veiled in gloom
  Though clouded her decree,
Yet doubt not that a juster doom
  She keeps in store for thee.

Then cast hope's anchor near the shore,
  'Twill hold your vessel fast,
And fear not for the tide's deep roar,
  And dread not for the blast.

For though this station now seems near,
  'Mid land-locked creeks to be,
The helmsman soon his ship will steer,
  Out to the wide blue sea.

Well officered and staunchly manned,
  Well built to meet the blast ;
With favouring winds, the bark must land
  On glorious shores at last.

CHARLOTTE BRONTË.

February 1840.

tricks, wiles, and insincerities of love, the gentleman has not his match for twenty miles round. He would fain persuade every woman under thirty whom he sees that he is desperately in love with her. I have a great deal more to say, but I have not a moment's time to write it in. My dear Ellen, *do* write to me soon, don't forget.—Good-bye.

Letter 83

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

March 21*st*, 1841.

MY DEAREST ELLEN,—You must excuse a very short answer to your most welcome letter; for my time is entirely occupied. Mrs. White expects a good deal of sewing from me. I cannot sew much during the day, on account of the children, who require the closest attention. I am obliged, therefore, to devote the evenings to this business. You are depressed and unhappy, I see, whatever your uneasiness is owing to. You give me no further explanation of Mary's behaviour. Take comfort, Nell—write to me often very long letters. It will do both of us good. This place is far better than Stonegappe, but, God knows, I have enough to do to keep a good heart in the matter. What you said has cheered me a little. I wish I could always act according to your advice. Home-sickness afflicts me sorely. I like Mr. White extremely. Respecting Mrs. White I am for the present silent. I am trying hard to like her. The children are not such little devils incarnate as the Sidgwicks', but they are over-indulged, and at times hard to manage. *Do*, *do*, *do* come to see me; if it be a breach of etiquette, never mind. If you can only stop an hour, come. Talk no more about my forsaking you; my dear Nell, I could not afford to do so. I find it is not in my nature to get on in this weary world without sympathy and attachment in some quarter; and seldom, indeed, do we find it. It is too great a treasure to be ever wantonly thrown away when once secured. I do not know how to wear your pretty little handcuffs. When you come you shall explain the mystery. I send you the precious valentine. Make much of it. Remember the writer's blue eyes, auburn hair, and rosy cheeks. You may consider the concern addressed to yourself, for I have no doubt he intended it to suit anybody. Fare-thee-well, Nell.

Letter 84

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

UPPERWOOD HOUSE, *April 1st*, 1841.

MY DEAR NELLY,—It is twelve o'clock at night, but I must just write to you a word before I go to bed. If you think I am going to refuse your invitation, or if you sent it me with that idea, you 're mistaken. As soon as I read your shabby little note, I gathered up my spirits directly, walked on the impulse of the moment into Mrs. White's presence, popped the question, and for two minutes received no answer. Will she refuse me when I work so hard for her? thought I. 'Ye-e-es' was said in a reluctant, cold tone. 'Thank you, ma'am,' said I, with extreme cordiality, and was marching from the room when she recalled me with: 'You 'd better go on Saturday afternoon then, when the children have holiday, and if you return in time for them to have all their lessons on Monday morning, I don't see that much will be lost.' You *are* a genuine Turk, thought I, but again I assented. Saturday after next, then, is the day appointed—*not next Saturday, mind.* I do not quite know whether the offer about the gig is not entirely out of your head or, if George has given his consent to it, whether that consent has not been wrung from him by the most persevering and irresistible teasing on the part of a certain young person of my acquaintance. I make no manner of doubt that if he does send the conveyance (as Miss Wooler used to denominate all wheeled vehicles) it will be to his own extreme detriment and inconvenience, but for once in my life I 'll not mind this, or bother my head about it. I 'll come—God knows with a thankful and joyful heart—glad of a day's reprieve from labour. If you don't send the gig I 'll walk. Now mind, I am not coming to Brookroyd with the idea of dissuading Mary Taylor from going to New Zealand. I 've said everything I mean to say on that subject, and she has a perfect right to decide for herself. I am coming to taste the pleasure of liberty, a bit of pleasant congenial talk, and a sight of two or three faces I like. God bless you. I want to see you again. Huzza for Saturday afternoon after next! Good-night, my lass. C. BRONTË.

Have you lit your pipe with Mr. Weightman's valentine?

Letter 85

TO EMILY J. BRONTË

UPPERWOOD HOUSE, *April 2nd*, 1841.

DEAR E. J.,—I received your last letter with delight as usual. I must write a line to thank you for it and the inclosure, which however is too bad—you ought not to have sent me those packets. I had a letter from Anne yesterday; she says she is well. I hope she speaks absolute truth. I had written to her and Branwell a few days before. I have not heard from Branwell yet. It is to be hoped that his removal to another station will turn out for the best. As you say, it *looks* like getting on at any rate.

I have got up my courage so far as to ask Mrs. White to grant me a day's holiday to go to Birstall to see Ellen Nussey, who has offered to send a gig for me. My request was granted, but so coldly and slowly. However, I stuck to my point in a very exemplary and remarkable manner. I hope to go next Saturday. Matters are progressing very strangely at Gomersall. Mary Taylor and Waring have come to a singular determination, but I almost think under the peculiar circumstances a defensible one, though it sounds outrageously odd at first. They are going to emigrate—to quit the country altogether. Their destination unless they change is Port Nicholson, in the northern island of New Zealand!!! Mary has made up her mind she can not and will not be a governess, a teacher, a milliner, a bonnet-maker nor housemaid. She sees no means of obtaining employment she would like in England, so she is leaving it. I counselled her to go to France likewise and stay there a year before she decided on this strange unlikely-sounding plan of going to New Zealand, but she is quite resolved. I cannot sufficiently comprehend what her views and those of her brothers may be on the subject, or what is the extent of their information regarding Port Nicholson, to say whether this is rational enterprise or absolute madness. With love to papa, aunt, Tabby, etc.—Good-bye. C. B.

P.S.—I am very well; I hope you are. Write again soon.

Letter 86

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

UPPERWOOD HOUSE, *May 4th*, 1841.

DEAR NELL,—I have been a long time without writing to you; but I think, knowing as you do how I am situated in the matter of time, you will not be angry with me. Your brother George will have told you that he did not go into the house when we arrived at Rawdon, for which omission of his Mrs. White was very near blowing me up. She went quite red in the face with vexation when she heard that the gentleman had just driven within the gate and then back again, for she is very touchy in the matter of opinion. Mr. White also seemed to regret the circumstance from more hospitable and kindly motives. I assure you, if you were to come and see me you would have quite a fuss made over you. During the last three weeks that hideous operation called 'a thorough clean' has been going on in the house. It is now nearly completed, for which I thank my stars, as during its progress I have fulfilled the twofold character of nurse and governess, while the nurse has been transmuted into cook and housemaid. That nurse, by the bye, is the prettiest lass you ever saw, and when dressed has much more the air of a lady than her mistress. Well can I believe that Mrs. White has been an exciseman's daughter, and I am convinced also that Mr. White's extraction is very low. Yet Mrs. White talks in an amusing strain of pomposity about his and her family connections, and affects to look down with wondrous hauteur on the whole race of tradesfolk, as she terms men of business. I was beginning to think Mrs. White a good sort of body in spite of all her bouncing and boasting, her bad grammar and worse orthography, but I have had experience of one little trait in her character which condemns her a long way with me. After treating a person in the most familiar terms of equality for a long time, if any little thing goes wrong she does not scruple to give way to anger in a very coarse, unladylike manner. I think passion is the true test of vulgarity or refinement.

This place looks exquisitely beautiful just now. The grounds are certainly lovely, and all is as green as an emerald. I wish you would just come and look at it. Mrs. White would be as proud as Punch to show it you. Mr. White has been writing

an urgent invitation to papa, entreating him to come and spend a week here. I don't at all wish papa to come, it would be like incurring an obligation. Somehow, I have managed to get a good deal more control over the children lately—this makes my life a good deal easier; also, by dint of nursing the fat baby, it has got to know me and be fond of me. I suspect myself of growing rather fond of it. Exertion of any kind is always beneficial. Come and see me if you can in any way get, I *want* to see you. It seems Martha Taylor is fairly gone. Good-bye, my lassie.—Yours insufferably, C. BRONTË.

Letter 87

TO THE REV. HENRY NUSSEY, EARNLEY RECTORY

UPPERWOOD HOUSE, RAWDON,
May 9th, 1841.

DEAR SIR,—I am about to employ part of a Sunday evening in answering your last letter. You will perhaps think this hardly right, and yet I do not feel that I am doing wrong. Sunday evening is almost my only time of leisure. No one would blame me if I were to spend this spare hour in a pleasant chat with a friend—is it worse to spend it in a friendly letter?

I have just seen my little noisy charges deposited snugly in their cribs, and I am sitting alone in the school-room with the quiet of a Sunday evening pervading the grounds and gardens outside my window. I owe you a letter—can I choose a better time than the present for paying my debt? Now, Mr. Nussey, you need not expect any gossip or news, I have none to tell you—even if I had I am not at present in the mood to communicate them. You will excuse an unconnected letter. If I had thought you critical or captious I would have declined the task of corresponding with you. When I reflect, indeed, it seems strange that I should sit down to write without a feeling of formality and restraint to an individual with whom I am personally so little acquainted as I am with yourself; but the fact is, I cannot be formal in a letter—if I write at all I must write as I think. It seems Ellen has told you that I am become a governess again. As you say, it is indeed a hard thing for flesh and blood to leave home, especially a *good* home—not a wealthy or splendid

one. My home is humble and unattractive to strangers, but to me it contains what I shall find nowhere else in the world—the profound, the intense affection which brothers and sisters feel for each other when their minds are cast in the same mould, their ideas drawn from the same source—when they have clung to each other from childhood, and when disputes have never sprung up to divide them.

We are all separated now, and winning our bread amongst strangers as we can—my sister Anne is near York, my brother in a situation near Halifax, I am here. Emily is the only one left at home, where her usefulness and willingness make her indispensable. Under these circumstances should we repine? I think not—our mutual affection ought to comfort us under all difficulties. If the God on whom we must all depend will but vouchsafe us health and the power to continue in the strict line of duty, so as never under any temptation to swerve from it an inch, we shall have ample reason to be grateful and contented.

I do not pretend to say that I am always contented. A governess must often submit to have the heartache. My employers, Mr. and Mrs. White, are kind worthy people in their way, but the children are indulged. I have great difficulties to contend with sometimes. Perseverance will perhaps conquer them. And it has gratified me much to find that the parents are well satisfied with their children's improvement in learning since I came. But I am dwelling too much upon my own concerns and feelings. It is true they are interesting to me, but it is wholly impossible they should be so to you, and, therefore, I hope you will skip the last page, for I repent having written it.

A fortnight since I had a letter from Ellen urging me to go to Brookroyd for a single day. I felt such a longing to have a respite from labour, and to get once more amongst 'old familiar faces,' that I conquered diffidence and asked Mrs. White to let me go. She complied, and I went accordingly, and had a most delightful holiday. I saw your mother, your sisters, Mercy, Ellen, and poor Sarah, and your brothers Richard and George—all were well. Ellen talked of endeavouring to get a situation somewhere. I did not encourage the idea much. I advised her rather to go to Earnley for a while. I think she wants a change, and I dare say you would be glad to have her as a companion for a few months.—I remain, yours respectfully, C. BRONTË.

Letter 88

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

UPPERWOOD HOUSE, *June 10th*, 1841.

DEAR NELL,—If I don't scrawl you a line of some sort I know you will begin to fancy that I neglect you, in spite of all I said last time we met. You can hardly fancy it possible, I dare say, that I cannot find a quarter of an hour to scribble a note in; but when a note is written it is to be carried a mile to the post, and consumes nearly an hour, which is a large portion of the day. Mr. and Mrs. White have been gone a week. I heard from them this morning; they are now at Hexham. No time is fixed for their return, but I hope it will not be delayed long, or I shall miss the chance of seeing Anne this vacation. She came home, I understand, last Wednesday, and is only to be allowed three weeks' holidays, because the family she is with are going to Scarborough. *I should like to see her* to judge for myself of the state of her health. I cannot trust any other person's report, no one seems minute enough in their observations. I should also very much have liked you to see her.

I have got on very well with the servants and children so far, yet it is dreary, solitary work. You can tell as well as me the lonely feeling of being without a companion. I offered the Irish concern to Mary Taylor, but she is so circumstanced that she cannot accept it. Her brothers, like George, have a feeling of pride that revolts at the thought of their sister 'going out.' I hardly knew that it was such a degradation till lately.

Your visit did me much good. I wish Mary Taylor would come, and yet I hardly know how to find time to be with her.—Good-bye. God bless you. C. BRONTË.

I am very well, and I continue to get to bed before twelve o'clock P.M. I don't tell people that I am dissatisfied with my situation. I can drive on; there is no use in complaining. I have lost my chance of going to Ireland.

Letter 89

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

July 1st, 1841.

DEAR NELL,—I was not at home when I got your letter, but I am at home now, and it feels like Paradise. I came last night.

When I asked for a vacation, Mrs. White offered me a week or ten days, but I demanded three weeks, and stood to my tackle with a tenacity worthy of yourself, lassie. I gained the point, but I don't like such victories. I have gained another point. You are unanimously requested to come here next Tuesday and stay as long as you can. Aunt is in high good-humour. I need not write a long letter. Good-bye, dear Nell. C. B.

P.S.—I have lost the chance of seeing Anne. She is gone back to 'the land of Egypt and the house of Bondage.' Also, little black Tom is dead;—every cup, however sweet, has its drop of bitterness in it. Probably you will be at a loss to ascertain the identity of black Tom, but don't fret about it, I'll tell you when you come. Keeper is as well, big, and grim as ever. I'm too happy to write. Come, come, lassie.

Letter 90

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

July 19*th*, '41.

My dear Ellen,—We waited long and anxiously for you on the Thursday that you promised to come. I quite wearied my eyes with watching from the window, eyeglass in hand, and sometimes spectacles on nose. However, you are not to blame; I believe you have done right in going to Earnley; and as to the disappointment, why, all must suffer disappointment at some period or other of their lives. But a hundred things I had to say to you will now be forgotten, and never said. There is a project hatching in this house, which both Emily and I anxiously wished to discuss with you. The project is yet in its infancy, hardly peeping from its shell; and whether it will ever come out a fine full-fledged chicken, or will turn addle, and die before it cheeps, is one of those considerations that are but dimly revealed by the oracles of futurity. Now, don't be nonplussed by all this metaphorical mystery. I talk of a plain and everyday occurrence, though, in Delphic style, I wrap up the information in figures of speech concerning eggs, chickens, etcetera, etceterorum. To come to the point, papa and aunt talk, by fits and starts, of our —*id est*, Emily, Anne, and myself—commencing a school. I have often, you know, said how much I wished such a thing; but

I never could conceive where the capital was to come from for making such a speculation? I was well aware, indeed, that aunt had money, but I always considered that she was the last person who would offer a loan for the purpose in question. A loan, however, she *has* offered, or rather intimates that she perhaps *will* offer, in case pupils can be secured, an eligible situation obtained, etc. This sounds very fair, but still there are matters to be considered which throw something of a damp upon the scheme. I do not expect that aunt will risk more than £150 on such a venture; and would it be possible to establish a respectable (not by any means a *showy*) school and to commence housekeeping with a capital of only that amount? Propound the question to your sister Ann, if you think she can answer it; or if not, don't say a word on the subject. As to getting into debt, that is a thing we could none of us reconcile our minds to for a moment. We do not care how modest, how humble a commencement be, so it be made on sure ground, and have a safe foundation. In thinking of all possible and impossible places where we could establish a school, I have thought of Burlington, or rather of the neighbourhood of Burlington. Do you remember whether there was any other school there besides that of Miss J——? This is, of course, a perfectly crude and random idea. There are a hundred reasons why it should be an impracticable one. We have no connections, no acquaintances there; it is far from here, etc. Still, I fancy the ground in the East Riding is less fully occupied than in the West. Much inquiry and consideration will be necessary, of course, before any place is decided on; and I fear much time will elapse before any plan is executed.

Our revered friend, William Weightman, is quite as bonny, pleasant, light-hearted, good-tempered, generous, careless, fickle, and unclerical as ever. He keeps up his correspondence with Agnes Walton. During the last spring he went to Appleby, and stayed upwards of a month.

Write as soon as you can. I shall not leave my present situation till my future prospects assume a more fixed and definite aspect. Good-bye, dear Ellen. C. B.

I here come to some manuscripts of exceptional value—the only autobiographical glimpses of the sisters Emily and Anne. They came to me in a little black box some two or three inches long, of a kind that one might use for pins or

perhaps for snuff.[1] Here were four little pieces of paper neatly folded to the size of a sixpence. These papers were covered with handwriting, two of them by Emily, and two by Anne Brontë. They revealed a pleasant if eccentric arrangement on the part of the sisters, which appears to have been settled upon even after they had passed their twentieth year. They had agreed to write a kind of reminiscence every four years, to be opened by Emily on her birthday. The papers, however, tell their own story, and I give here the two which were written in 1841. Emily writes at Haworth, and Anne from her situation as governess to Mr. Robinson's children at Thorp Green. At this time, at any rate, Emily was fairly happy and in excellent health; and although it is five years from the publication of the volume of poems, she is full of literary projects, as is also her sister Anne. The *Gondaland Chronicles*, to which reference is made, must remain a mystery for us. They were doubtless destroyed, with abundant other memorials of Emily, by the heart-broken sister who survived her. We have plentiful material in the way of childish effort by Charlotte and by Branwell, but there is hardly a scrap in the early handwriting of Emily and Anne.

A PAPER to be opened
when Anne is
25 *years old,*
or my next birthday after
if
all be well.
Emily Jane Brontë. July the 30*th*, 1841.

It is Friday evening, near 9 *o'clock—wild rainy weather. I am seated in the dining-room, having just concluded tidying our desk*

[1] 'The four small scraps of Emily and Anne's MSS. I found in the small box I send you. They are sad reading, poor girls!'—Letter from the Rev. A. B. Nicholls to the author, 4th January 1895. See page 19.

boxes, writing this document. Papa is in the parlour—aunt upstairs in her room. She has been reading Blackwood's Magazine *to papa. Victoria and Adelaide are ensconced in the peat-house. Keeper is in the kitchen—Hero in his cage. We are all stout and hearty, as I hope is the case with Charlotte, Branwell, and Anne, of whom the first is at John White, Esq., Upperwood House, Rawdon; the second is at Luddenden Foot; and the third is, I believe, at Scarborough, inditing perhaps a paper corresponding to this.*

A scheme is at present in agitation for setting us up in a school of our own; as yet nothing is determined, but I hope and trust it may go on and prosper and answer our highest expectations. This day four years I wonder whether we shall still be dragging on in our present condition or established to our hearts' content. Time will show.

I guess that at the time appointed for the opening of this paper we i.e. *Charlotte, Anne, and I, shall be all merrily seated in our own sitting-room in some pleasant and flourishing seminary, having just gathered in for the midsummer ladyday. Our debts will be paid off, and we shall have cash in hand to a considerable amount. Papa, aunt, and Branwell will either have been or be coming to visit us. It will be a fine warm summer evening, very different from this bleak look-out, and Anne and I will perchance slip out into the garden for a few minutes to peruse our papers. I hope either this or something better will be the case.*

The Gondaland *are at present in a threatening state, but there is no open rupture as yet. All the princes and princesses of the Royalty are at the Palace of Instruction. I have a good many books on hand, but I am sorry to say that as usual I make small progress with any. However, I have just made a new regularity paper! and I must* verb sap *to do great things. And now I must close, sending from far an exhortation, 'Courage, boys! courage,' to exiled and harassed Anne, wishing she was here.*

Anne, as I have said, writes from Thorp Green.

July the 30*th*, A.D. 1841.

This is Emily's birthday. She has now completed her 23*rd year, and is, I believe, at home. Charlotte is a governess in the family of Mr. White. Branwell is a clerk in the railroad station at Luddenden Foot, and I am a governess in the family of Mr. Robinson.*

I dislike the situation and wish to change it for another. I am now at Scarborough. My pupils are gone to bed and I am hastening to finish this before I follow them.

We are thinking of setting up a school of our own, but nothing definite is settled about it yet, and we do not know whether we shall be able to or not. I hope we shall. And I wonder what will be our condition and how or where we shall all be on this day four years hence; at which time, if all be well, I shall be 25 *years and* 6 *months old, Emily will be* 27 *years old, Branwell* 28 *years and* 1 *month, and Charlotte* 29 *years and a quarter. We are now all separate and not likely to meet again for many a weary week, but we are none of us ill that I know of, and all are doing something for our own livelihood except Emily, who, however, is as busy as any of us, and in reality earns her food and raiment as much as we do.*

> *How little know we what we are*
> *How less what we may be!*

Four years ago I was at school. Since then I have been a governess at Blake Hall, left it, come to Thorp Green, and seen the sea and York Minster. Emily has been a teacher at Miss Patchet's school, and left it. Charlotte has left Miss Wooler's, been a governess at Mrs. Sidgwick's, left her, and gone to Mrs. White's. Branwell has given up painting, been a tutor in Cumberland, left it, and become a clerk on the railroad. Tabby has left us, Martha Brown has come in her place. We have got Keeper, got a sweet little cat and lost it, and also got a hawk. Got a wild goose which has flown away, and three tame ones, one of which has been killed. All these diversities, with many others, are things we did not expect or foresee in the July of 1837. *What will the next four years bring forth? Providence only knows. But we ourselves have sustained very little alteration since that time. I have the same faults that I had then, only I have more wisdom and experience, and a little more self-possession than I then enjoyed. How will it be when we open this paper and the one Emily has written? I wonder whether the* Gondaland *will still be flourishing, and what will be their condition. I am now engaged in writing the fourth volume of* Solala Vernon's Life.

For some time I have looked upon 25 *as a sort of era in my existence. It may prove a true presentiment, or it may be only a superstitious fancy; the latter seems most likely, but time will show.*

Anne Brontë.

Letter 91

TO ELLEN NUSSEY, EARNLEY RECTORY,
CHICHESTER, SUSSEX

UPPERWOOD HOUSE, *August 7th*, 1841.

MY DEAR ELLEN,—This is Saturday evening; I have put the children to bed; now I am going to sit down and answer your letter. I am again by myself—housekeeper and governess—for Mr. and Mrs White are staying with a Mrs. Duncan of Bleak Hall, near Tadcaster. To speak the truth, though I am solitary while they are away, it is still by far the happiest part of my time. The children are at least under decent control, the servants are very observant and attentive to me, and the occasional absence of the master and mistress relieves me from the duty of always endeavouring to seem cheerful and conversable. Martha, it appears, is in the way of enjoying great advantage; so is Mary, for you will be surprised to hear that she is returning immediately to the Continent with her brother John; not, however, to stay there, but to take a month's tour and recreation. I have had a long letter from Mary, and a packet containing a present of a very handsome black silk scarf, and a pair of beautiful kid gloves, bought at Brussels. Of course I was in one sense pleased with the gift—pleased that they should think of me so far off, amidst the excitements of one of the most splendid capitals of Europe; and yet it felt irksome to accept it. I should think they have not more than sufficient pocket-money to supply themselves. I wish they had testified their regard by a less expensive token. Mary's letters spoke of some of the pictures and cathedrals she had seen—pictures the most exquisite, cathedrals the most venerable. I hardly know what swelled to my throat as I read her letter: such a vehement impatience of restraint and steady work; such a strong wish for wings—wings such as wealth can furnish; such an earnest thirst to see, to know, to learn; something internal seemed to expand boldly for a minute. I was tantalised with the consciousness of faculties unexercised; then all collapsed, and I despaired. My dear, I would hardly make that confession to any one but yourself; and to you, rather in a letter than *vivâ voce*. These rebellious and absurd emotions were only momentary; I quelled them in five minutes. I hope they will not revive, for they were acutely painful. No further steps have been taken about the project I mentioned

to you, nor probably will be for the present; but Emily, and Anne, and I, keep it in view. It is our polar star, and we look to it under all circumstances of despondency. I begin to suspect I am writing in a strain which will make you think I am unhappy. This is far from being the case; on the contrary, I know my place is a favourable one, for a governess. What dismays and haunts me sometimes, is a conviction that I have no natural knack for my vocation. If teaching only were requisite, it would be smooth and easy; but it is the living in other people's houses, the estrangement from one's real character,—the adoption of a cold, frigid, apathetic exterior, that is painful. . . . On the whole I am glad you went with Henry to Sussex. Our disappointment was bitter enough. You will not mention our school scheme at present. A project not actually commenced is always uncertain. Write to me often, dear, you *know* your letters are valued. Give my regards to your brother and sister and believe me, your 'loving child' (as you choose to call me so). C. B.

P.S.—I have one aching feeling at my heart (I must allude to it, though I had resolved not to). It is about Anne; she has so much to endure: far, far more than I have. When my thoughts turn to her, they always see her as a patient, persecuted stranger. I know what concealed susceptibility is in her nature, when her feelings are wounded. I wish I could be with her, to administer a little balm. She is more lonely, less gifted with the power of making friends, even than I am. Drop the subject.

Letter 92

TO ELIZABETH BRANWELL, HAWORTH

UPPERWOOD HOUSE, RAWDON, *September* 29*th*, 1841.

DEAR AUNT,—I have heard nothing of Miss Wooler yet since I wrote to her intimating that I would accept her offer. I cannot conjecture the reason of this long silence, unless some unforeseen impediment has occurred in concluding the bargain. Meantime, a plan has been suggested and approved by Mr. and Mrs. White, and others, which I wish now to impart to you. My friends recommend me, if I desire to secure permanent success, to delay commencing the school for six months longer, and by all means to contrive, by hook or by crook, to spend the intervening time

in some school on the Continent. They say schools in England are so numerous, competition so great, that without some such step towards attaining superiority we shall probably have a very hard struggle, and may fail in the end. They say, moreover, that the loan of £100, which you have been so kind as to offer us, will, perhaps, not be all required now, as Miss Wooler will lend us the furniture; and that, if the speculation is intended to be a good and successful one, half the sum, at least, ought to be laid out in the manner I have mentioned, thereby insuring a more speedy repayment both of interest and principal.

I would not go to France or to Paris. I would go to Brussels, in Belgium. The cost of the journey there, at the dearest rate of travelling, would be £5; living is there little more than half as dear as it is in England, and the facilities for education are equal or superior to any other place in Europe. In half a year, I could acquire a thorough familiarity with French. I could improve greatly in Italian, and even get a dash of German, *i.e.* providing my health continued as good as it is now. Martha Taylor is now staying in Brussels, at a first-rate establishment there. I should not think of going to the Château de Kockleberg, where she is resident, as the terms are much too high; but if I wrote to her, she, with the assistance of Mrs. Jenkins, the wife of the British Consul, would be able to secure me a cheap and decent residence and respectable protection. I should have the opportunity of seeing her frequently, she would make me acquainted with the city; and, with the assistance of her cousins, I should probably in time be introduced to connections far more improving, polished, and cultivated, than any I have yet known.

These are advantages which would turn to vast account, when we actually commenced a school—and, if Emily could share them with me, only for a single half-year, we could take a footing in the world afterwards which we can never do now. I say Emily instead of Anne; for Anne might take her turn at some future period, if our school answered. I feel certain, while I am writing, that you will see the propriety of what I say; you always like to use your money to the best advantage; you are not fond of making shabby purchases; when you do confer a favour, it is often done in style; and depend upon it £50, or £100, thus laid out, would be well employed. Of course, I know no other friend in the world to whom I could apply on this subject except yourself. I feel an absolute conviction that, if this advantage were

allowed us, it would be the making of us for life. Papa will perhaps think it a wild and ambitious scheme; but who ever rose in the world without ambition? When he left Ireland to go to Cambridge University, he was as ambitious as I am now. I want us *all* to go on. I know we have talents, and I want them to be turned to account. I look to you, aunt, to help us. I think you will not refuse. I know, if you consent, it shall not be my fault if you ever repent your kindness. With love to all, and the hope that you are all well,—Believe me, dear aunt, your affectionate niece,

C. BRONTË.

Letter 93

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

UPPERWOOD HOUSE, *October 17th*, 1841.

DEAR NELL,—It is a cruel thing of you to be always upbraiding me when I am a trifle remiss or so in writing a letter. I see I can't make you comprehend that I have not quite as much time on my hands as Miss Harris of S. Lane, or Mrs. Mills. I never neglect you on purpose. I could not *do* it, you little teasing, faithless wretch.

The humour I am in is worse than words can describe. I have had a hideous dinner of some abominable spiced-up indescribable mess, and it has exasperated me against the world at large. So you are coming home, are you? Then don't expect me to write a long letter. I am not going to Dewsbury Moor, as far as I can see at present. It was a decent friendly proposal on Miss Wooler's part, and cancels all or most of her little foibles, in my estimation; but Dewsbury Moor is a poisoned place to me; besides, I burn to go somewhere else. I think, Nell, I see a chance of getting to Brussels.[1] Mary Taylor advises me to this step. My own mind and feelings urge me. I can't write a word more. C. B.

[1] The following note shows the manner in which Brussels first became a place of interest to Miss Brontë: it is from the 'Jessie' who died there, as described in *Shirley*, and is written to Miss Nussey:—

MY DEAR ELLEN,—I received your letter from Mary, and you say I am to write tho' I have nothing to say. My sister will tell you all about me, for she has more time to write than I have.

Whilst Mary and John have been with me, we have been to Liége and Spa where we staid eight days. I found my little knowledge of French very useful in our travels. I

Letter 94

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

RAWDON, *November* 2, 1841.

Let us discuss business matters first and then quarrel like cat and dog afterwards. Mr. White has already five applications from ex-governesses under consideration. Now let us begin to quarrel. In the first place, I must consider whether I will commence operations on the defensive or the offensive. The defensive, I think. You say, and I see plainly, that your feelings have been hurt by an apparent want of confidence on my part. You heard from others of Miss Wooler's overtures before I communicated them to you myself. This is true. I was deliberating on plans important to my future prospects. I never exchanged a letter with you on the subject. True again. This appears strange conduct to a friend, near and dear, long known, and never found wanting. Most true. I cannot give you my *excuses* for this behaviour; this word *excuse* implies confession of a fault, and I do not feel that I have been in fault. The plain fact is, I *was* not, I am not now, certain of my destiny. On the contrary, I have been most uncertain, perplexed with contradictory schemes and proposals. My time, as I have often told you, is fully occupied; yet I had many letters to write, which it was absolutely necessary should be written. I knew it would avail nothing to write to you then to say I was in doubt and uncertainty —hoping this, fearing that, anxious, eagerly desirous to do what seemed impossible to be done. When I thought of you in that busy interval, it was to resolve that you should know all when my way was clear, and my grand end attained. If I could I would always work in silence and obscurity, and let my efforts be known by their results. Miss Wooler did most kindly propose that I should come to Dewsbury Moor, and attempt to revive the school her sister had relinquished. She offered me the use of her

am going to begin working again very hard, now that John and Mary are going away, I intend beginning German directly. I would write some more, but this pen of Mary's won't write, you must scold her for it and tell her to write you a long account of my proceedings. You must write to me sometimes. George Dixon is coming here the last week in September, and you must send a letter for me to Mary to be forwarded by him. Good-bye. May you be happy. MARTHA TAYLOR.

BRUSSELS, *Sepbr. 9th*, 1841.

furniture. At first I received the proposal cordially, and prepared to do my utmost to bring about success; but a fire was kindled in my very heart, which I could not quench. I so longed to increase my attainments—to become something better than I am; a glimpse of what I felt I showed to you in one of my former letters—only a glimpse; Mary cast oil upon the flames—encouraged me, and in her own strong, energetic language heartened me on. I longed to go to Brussels; but how could I get there? I wished for one, at least, of my sisters to share the advantage with me. I fixed on Emily. She deserved the reward, I knew. How could the point be managed? In extreme excitement I wrote a letter home, which carried the day. I made an appeal to my aunt for assistance, which was answered by consent. Things are not settled; yet it is sufficient to say we have a *chance* of going for half a year. Dewsbury Moor is relinquished. Perhaps fortunately so, for it is an obscure, dreary place, not adapted for a school. In my secret soul I believe there is no cause to regret it. My plans for the future are bounded to this intention: if I once get to Brussels, and if my health is spared, I will do my best to make the utmost of every advantage that shall come within my reach. When the half-year is expired I will do what I can.

. . . .

Believe me, though I was born in April, the month of cloud and sunshine, I am not changeful. My spirits are unequal, and sometimes I speak vehemently, and sometimes I say nothing at all; but I have a steady regard for you, and if you will let the cloud and shower pass by, be sure the sun is always behind, obscured, but still existing.

Write to say all is forgiven; I 'm fit to cry.

C. B.

Letter 95

TO EMILY J. BRONTË

UPPERWOOD HOUSE, RAWDON,
November 7th, 1841.

DEAR E. J.,—You are not to suppose that this note is written with a view of communicating any information on the subject we both have considerably at heart. I have written letters, but I have received no letters in reply yet. Belgium is a long way off,

and people are everywhere hard to spur up to the proper speed. Mary Taylor says we can scarcely expect to get off before January. I have wished and intended to write to both Anne and Branwell, but really I have not had time.

Mr. Jenkins I find was mistakenly termed the British Consul at Brussels; he is in fact the English Episcopal clergyman.

I think perhaps we shall find that the best plan will be for papa to write a letter to him by-and-by, but not yet. I will give an intimation when this should be done, and also some idea of what had best be said. Grieve not over Dewsbury Moor. You were cut out there to all intents and purposes, so in fact was Anne; Miss Wooler would hear of neither for the first half-year.

Anne seems omitted in the present plan, but if all goes right I trust she will derive her full share of benefit from it in the end. I exhort all to hope. I believe in my heart this is acting for the best; my only fear is lest others should doubt and be dismayed. Before our half-year in Brussels is completed, you and I will have to seek employment abroad. It is not my intention to retrace my steps home till twelve months, if all continues well and we and those at home retain good health.

I shall probably take my leave of Upperwood about the 15th or 17th of December. When does Anne talk of returning? How is she? What does William Weightman say to these matters? How are papa and aunt, do they flag? How will Anne get on with Martha? Has William Weightman been seen or heard of lately? Love to all. Write quickly.—Good-bye.

C. BRONTË.

I am well.

Letter 96

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

RAWDON, *December* 10*th*, 1841

MY DEAR ELLEN,—I hear from Mary Taylor that you are come home, and also that you have been ill. If you are able to write comfortably, let me know the feelings that preceded your illness and also its effects. I wish to see you. Mary Taylor reports that your looks are much as usual. I expect to get back to Haworth in the course of a fortnight or three weeks. I hope I shall then see you. I would rather you came to Haworth

than I went to Brookroyd. My plans advance slowly and I am not yet certain where I shall go, or what I shall do when I leave Upperwood House. Brussels is still my promised land, but there is still the wilderness of time and space to cross before I reach it. I am not likely, I think, to go to the Château de Kockleberg. I have heard of a less expensive establishment. So far I had written when I received your letter. I was glad to get it. Why don't you mention your illness? I had intended to have got this note off two or three days past, but I am more straitened for time than ever just now. We have gone to bed at twelve or one o'clock during the last three nights. I must get this scrawl off to-day or you will think me negligent. The new governess, that is to be, has been to see my plans, etc. My dear Ellen, Good-bye.—Believe me, in heart and soul, your sincere friend, C. B.

Letter 97

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

December 17th, 1841.

MY DEAR ELLEN,—I am yet uncertain when I shall leave Upperwood, but of one thing I am very certain: when I do leave I must go straight home. It is absolutely necessary that some definite arrangement should be commenced for our future plans before I go visiting anywhere. That I wish to see you I know, that I intend and *hope* to see you before long I also know; that you will at the first impulse accuse me of neglect, I fear; that upon consideration you will acquit me, I devoutly trust. Dear Ellen, come to Haworth if you can; if you cannot, I will endeavour to come for a day at least to Brookroyd, but do not depend on this—come to Haworth. I thank you for Mr. Jenkins' address. You always think of other people's convenience, however ill and affected you are yourself. How very much I wish to see you, you do not know; but if I were to go to Brookroyd now, it would deeply disappoint those at home. I have some hopes of seeing Branwell at Xmas, and when I shall be able to see him afterwards I cannot tell. He has never been at home for the last five months.—Good-night, dear Ellen. C. B.

Letter 98

TO MERCY NUSSEY

RAWDON, *December 17th*, 1841.

MY DEAR MISS MERCY,—Though I am very much engaged I must find time to thank you for the kind and polite contents of your note. I should act in the manner most consonant with my own feelings if I at once, and without qualification, accepted your invitation. I do not, however, consider it advisable to indulge myself so far at present. When I leave Upperwood I must go straight home. Whether I shall afterwards have time to pay a short visit to Brookroyd I do not yet know—circumstances must determine that. I would fain see Ellen at Haworth instead; our visitations are not shared with any show of justice. It shocked me very much to hear of her illness—may it be the first and last time she ever experiences such an attack! Ellen, I fear, has thought I neglected her, in not writing sufficiently long or frequent letters. It is a painful idea to me that she has had this feeling—it could not be more groundless. I know her value, and I would not lose her affection for any probable compensation I can imagine. Remember me to your mother. I trust she will soon regain her health.—Believe me, my dear Miss Mercy, yours sincerely, C. BRONTË.

Letter 99

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *January 10th*, 1842.

MY DEAR ELLEN,—Will you write as soon as you get this and fix your own day for coming to Haworth? I got home on Christmas Eve. The parting scene between me and my late employers was such as to efface the memory of much that annoyed me while I was there, but indeed, during the whole of the last six months they only made too much of me. Anne has rendered herself so valuable in her difficult situation that they have entreated her to return to them, if it be but for a short time. I almost think she will go back, if we can get a good servant who will do all our work. We want one about forty or fifty years old, good-tempered, clean, and honest. You shall hear all about

Brussels, etc., when you come. Mr. Weightman is still here, just the same as ever. I have a curiosity to see a meeting between you and him. He will be again desperately in love, I am convinced. *Come.* C. B.

Letter 100

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

MY DEAR ELLEN,—I had forgotten when I asked you to come on Tuesday that there is no coach from Birstall to Bradford except on Thursday. Moreover, Aunt is proposing to pay a visit to Uncle Fennell, at Cross-stone, who is very ill. She has fixed next Thursday to go, and as she will probably stay a week or two, she will leave her room at liberty, which will be much more comfortable for you than being crowded into our little closet. I wish therefore, my dear Ellen, you could make it convenient to come on that day—it will be a real pleasure both to Emily and myself to have you with us, and a great disappointment if you fail to come. Believe me, yours sincerely, C. B.

Write by return of post.

Letter 101

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

January 20th, 1842.

DEAR ELLEN,—I cannot quite enter into your friends' reasons for not permitting you to come to Haworth; but as it is at present, and in all human probability will be for an indefinite time to come, impossible for me to get to Brookroyd, the balance of accounts is not so unequal as it might otherwise be. We expect to leave England in less than three weeks, but we are not yet certain of the day, as it will depend upon the convenience of a French lady now in London, Madame Marzials, under whose escort we are to sail. Our place of destination is changed. Papa received an unfavourable account from Mr., or rather Mrs., Jenkins of the French schools in Brussels, and on further inquiry, an Institution in Lille, in the North of France, was recommended by Baptist Noël and other clergymen, and to that place it is decided that we are to go. The terms are fifty pounds for each pupil for board and French alone.

I considered it kind in aunt to consent to an extra sum for a

separate room. We shall find it a great privilege in many ways. I regret the change from Brussels to Lille on many accounts, chiefly that I shall not see Martha Taylor. Mary has been indefatigably kind in providing me with information. She has grudged no labour, and scarcely any expense, to that end. Mary's price is above rubies. I have, in fact, two friends—you and her—staunch and true, in whose faith and sincerity I have as strong a belief as I have in the Bible. I have bothered you both, you especially; but you always get the tongs and heap coals of fire upon my head. I have had letters to write lately to Brussels, to Lille, and to London. I have lots of chemises, night-gowns, pocket-handkerchiefs, and pockets to make besides clothes to repair. I have been, every week since I came home, expecting to see Branwell, and he has never been able to get over yet. We fully expect him, however, next Saturday. Under these circumstances how can I go visiting? You tantalise me to death with talking of conversations by the fireside. Depend upon it, we are not to have any such for many a long month to come. I get an interesting impression of old age upon my face, and when you see me next I shall certainly wear caps and spectacles.

Write long letters to me, and tell me everything you can think of, and about everybody. 'His young reverence,' as you tenderly call him, is looking delicate and pale; poor thing, don't you pity him? I do from my heart! When he is well, and fat and jovial, I never think of him, but when anything ails him I am always sorry. He sits opposite to Anne at church, sighing softly, and looking out of the corners of his eyes to win her attention, and Anne is so quiet, her look so downcast, they are a picture.—Yours affectionately, C. B.

M. Constantin Héger

From a photograph lent by Mlle. Héger

CHAPTER XI

THE PENSIONNAT HÉGER, BRUSSELS

HAD not the impulse come to Charlotte Brontë to add somewhat to her scholastic accomplishments by a sojourn in Brussels, our literature would have lost that powerful novel *Villette*, and the singularly charming *Professor*. The impulse came, as we have seen, from the persuasion that without 'languages' the school project was an entirely hopeless one. Mary and Martha Taylor were at Brussels, staying with friends, and thence, as one of Charlotte's letters tells us, they had sent kindly presents to her, at this time fretting under the yoke of governess at Upperwood House. Charlotte wrote the diplomatic letter to her aunt which ended so satisfactorily. The good lady—Miss Branwell was then about sixty years of age—behaved handsomely by her nieces, and it was agreed that Charlotte and Emily were to go to the Continent, Anne retaining her post of governess with Mrs. Robinson at Thorp Green. But Brussels schools did not seem at the first blush to be very satisfactory. Something better promised at Lille.

The Mr. Jenkins referred to in the last letter was chaplain to the British Embassy at Brussels, and not Consul, as Charlotte had at first supposed. The brother of his wife was a clergyman living in the neighbourhood of Haworth. Mr. Jenkins, whose English Episcopal chapel Charlotte attended during her stay in Brussels, finally recommended the Pensionnat Héger in the Rue

d'Isabelle.[1] Madame Héger wrote, accepting the two girls as pupils, and to Brussels their father escorted them in February 1842, staying one night at the house of Mr. Jenkins and then returning to Haworth.

The life of Charlotte Brontë at Brussels has been mirrored for us with absolute accuracy in *Villette* and *The Professor*. That, indeed, from the point of view of local colour, is made sufficiently plain to the casual visitor of to-day who calls in the Rue d'Isabelle. The house, it is true, has been dismantled and incorporated into some city buildings in the background. But when I was there one might still eat pears from the 'old and huge fruit-trees' which flourished when Charlotte and Emily walked under

[1] The circular issued by Madame Héger ran as follows :—

MAISON D'ÉDUCATION
Pour les Jeunes Demoiselles.

SOUS LA DIRECTION
DE MADAME HÉGER-PARENT,
Rue d'Isabelle à Bruxelles.

Cet établissement est situé dans l'endroit le plus salubre de la ville.

Le cours d'instruction, basé sur la Religion, comprend essentiellement la Langue Française, l'Histoire, l'Arithmétique, la Géographie, l'Écriture, ainsi que tous les ouvrages à l'aiguille que doit connaître une demoiselle bien élevée.

La santé des élèves est l'objet d'une surveillance active; les parents peuvent se reposer avec sécurité sur les mesures qui ont été prises à cet égard dans l'établissement.

Le prix de la pension est de 650 francs, celui de la demi-pension est de 350 francs, payables par quartiers et d'avance. Il n'y a d'autres frais accessoires que les étrennes des domestiques.

Il n'est fait aucune déduction pour le temps que les élèves passent chez elles dans le courant de l'année. Le nombre des élèves étant limité, les parents qui désireraient reprendre leurs enfants sont tenus d'en prévenir la directrice trois mois d'avance.

Les leçons de musique, de langues étrangères, etc. etc., sont au compte des parents.

Le costume des pensionnaires est uniforme.

La directrice s'engage à répondre à toutes les demandes qui pourraient lui être adressées par les parents relativement aux autres détails de son institution.

OBJETS À FOURNIR.

Lit complet, bassin, aiguière et draps de lit.
Serviettes de table.
Une malle fermant à clef.
Un couvert d'argent
Un gobelet.

Si les élèves ne sont pas de Bruxelles, on leur fournira un lit garni moyennant 34 francs par an.

them sixty-six years ago. One might still wander through the school-rooms, the long dormitories, and into the 'vine-draped *berceau*'—little enough is changed within and without. Here was the dormitory with its twenty beds, the two end ones being occupied by Emily and Charlotte, they alone securing the privilege of age or English eccentricity to curtain off their beds from the gaze of the eighteen girls who shared the room with them. The crucifix, indeed, had been removed from the niche in the *Oratoire* where the children offered up prayer every morning; but with a copy of *Villette* in hand it was possible to restore every feature of the place, not excluding the adjoining Athénée with its small window overlooking the garden of the Pensionnat and the *allée défendue*. It was from this window that Mr. Crimsworth of *The Professor* looked down upon the girls at play. It was here, indeed, at the Royal Athénée, that M. Héger was Professor of Latin. Externally, then, the Pensionnat Héger remains practically the same as it appeared to Charlotte and Emily Brontë in February 1842, when they made their first appearance in Brussels. The Rue Fossette of *Villette*, the Rue d'Isabelle of *The Professor*, are the veritable Rue d'Isabelle of Currer Bell's experience.

What, however, shall we say of the people who wandered through these rooms and gardens—the fifty or more children, the three or four governesses, the professor and his wife? Here there has been much speculation and not a little misreading of the actual facts. Charlotte and Emily went to Brussels to learn. They did learn with energy. It was their first experience of foreign travel, and it came too late in life for them to enter into it with that breadth of mind and tolerance of the customs of other lands, lacking which the Englishman abroad is always an offence. Charlotte and Emily hated the country and people. They had been brought up ultra-Protestants. Their father was an Ulster man, and his one venture into the polemics of

his age was to attack the proposals for Catholic emancipation. With this inheritance of intolerance, how could Charlotte and Emily face with kindliness the Romanism which they saw around them? How heartily Charlotte disapproved of it many a picture in *Villette* has made plain to us.

Charlotte had been in Brussels three months when she made the friendship to which I am indebted for anything that there may be to add to this episode in her life. Miss Lætitia Wheelwright was one of five sisters, the daughters of a doctor in Lower Phillimore Place, Kensington. Dr. Wheelwright went to Brussels for his health and for his children's education. The girls were day boarders at the Pensionnat, but they lived in the house for a full month or more at a time when their father and mother were on a trip up the Rhine. Otherwise their abode was a flat in the Hôtel Clusyenaar in the Rue Royale, and there during her later stay in Brussels Charlotte frequently paid them visits. In this earlier period Charlotte and Emily were too busy with their books to think of 'calls' and the like frivolities, and it must be confessed also that at the beginning of their friendship Lætitia Wheelwright would have thought it too high a price to pay for a visit from Charlotte to receive as a fellow-guest the apparently unamiable Emily. Miss Wheelwright, who was herself fourteen years of age when she entered the Pensionnat Héger, recalls the two sisters, thin and sallow-looking, pacing up and down the garden, friendless and alone. It was the sight of Lætitia standing up in the class-room and glancing round with a semi-contemptuous air at all these Belgian girls which attracted Charlotte Brontë to her. 'It was so very English,' Miss Brontë laughingly remarked at a later period to her friend. There was one other English girl at this time of sufficient age to be companionable; but with Miss Maria Miller, whom Charlotte Brontë has depicted under the guise of

Ginevra Fanshawe, she had less in common. In later years Miss Miller became Mrs. Robertson, the wife of an author in one form or another.[1]

To Miss Wheelwright, and those of her sisters who are still living, the descriptions of the Pensionnat Héger which are given in *Villette* and *The Professor* are perfectly accurate. M. Héger, with his heavy black moustache and his black hair, entering the class-room of an evening to read to his pupils, was a sufficiently familiar object, and his keen intelligence amounting almost to genius had affected the Wheelwright girls as forcibly as it had done the Brontës. Mme. Héger, again, for ever peeping from behind doors and through the plate-glass partitions which separate the passages from the school-rooms, was a constant source of irritation to all the English pupils. This prying and spying is, it is possible, more of a fine art with the school-mistresses of the Continent than with those of our own land. Much may doubtless be said for it. In any case, Mme. Héger, we are informed, was an accomplished spy, and in the midst of the most innocent work or recreation the pupils would suddenly see a pair of eyes pierce the dusk and disappear. This, and a hundred similar trifles, went to build up an antipathy on both sides, which had, however, scarcely begun when Charlotte and Emily were suddenly called home by their aunt's death in October. Meanwhile, the first letter from Brussels after Charlotte and Emily had arrived there is

[1] There was also a certain Susanna Mills, as the following letter, addressed to the Editor of the *South Wales Echo* in May 1901, will indicate :—

DEAR SIR,—Referring to your article of the 10th inst. *re* Charlotte Brontë : If it be a matter of interest, I may state that I, also, was a pupil at the Pensionnat Héger at the same time as Charlotte and her sister Emily, also the Miss Wheelrights, and it was only last summer (during my annual visit to Brussels) that I had the pleasure of meeting again Mademoiselle Louise Héger (daughter of the late celebrated professor), with whom I had a long chat, referring to days gone by, and our conversation naturally turned upon the two ladies in question, whom I remember perfectly well, although quite a young girl at the time.—Believe me, dear sir, yours truly, SUSANNA BANDY (*née* MILLS).

from Mary Taylor to Ellen Nussey. Mary is at the Château de Kockleberg with with her sister.

Letter 102

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

BRUSSELS, *March* 1842.

MY DEAR ELLEN,—Do not think that I have forgotten you because I have so many things to do that I can no more write to you now and then than I used to be able to run down to Brookroyd every other day. As for Miss Brontë, I have not seen her since I came here, so that you may judge I do not spend my time just as I like. Before breakfast I draw, after breakfast I practise, say German lessons and *draw*, after dinner walk out, learn German and *draw*, go to bed sometimes at nine o'clock heartily tired and without a word to throw at any one. If it were not Sunday, I could not write to you; fortunately the weather is too wet for us to go to church, so I have time for everything. In the enumeration of my employments I have forgotten the writing of French compositions. This is the plague of Kockleberg schoolroom. 'Avez-vous fait votre composition?' 'Oui, mais je ne puis pas—*put a beginning to it*.' 'Pouvez-vous m'aider?' Silence! 'What's the French for "invite"? It is eight *hours! When* shall we have the tea? How many years have you?' This is a French girl talking English—the Germans make an equal mess of both languages, the German teacher worst of all. I must now tell you of our teachers. Miss Evans is a well-educated Englishwoman who has been eight years in France, whom I should like very well if she were not so outrageously civil, that I every now and then suspect her of hypocrisy. The French teacher we have not yet got, so I can tell you nothing of her except that she is coming in a few days (which she has been doing ever since Christmas). Madame Ferdinand, the music-mistress, is a little, thin, black, talkative Frenchwoman; Monsieur her husband a tall, broad-shouldered man with a tremendous mouth, who is constantly telling his pupils that the voice has but a very little hole to get out at, and that there are both tongue and teeth to interrupt it in its road, and that the orifice ought by all means to be opened as wide as possible. Then comes M. Gauné, a little black old

Frenchman with his history written on his face, and a queer one it is—I speak either of the face or the history—which you please. He has a good appreciation of the literature of his own country and speaks some curious English. I think him a good master. Mons. Huard, the drawing-master, is a man of some talent, a good judgment, and an intelligible manner of teaching. He would be my favourite if he did not smell so of bad tobacco. Last and least is Mons. Scieré, not that he appears to me to want sense, and being a dancing-master he ought not to want manner—but he has the faults of a French puppy, and they make it advisable not to exchange more words with him than the everlasting 'Oui, monsieur—Non, monsieur.' Martha is considerably improved. I can't put out my feet—Allongez!—plus long! more! All our awkwardnesses, however, are thrown into the shade by those of a Belgian girl who does not know right foot from left, and obstinately dances with her mouth open. There is also a Mons. Hisard, who makes strange noises in the back schoolroom teaching gymnastics to some of the girls, and I had nearly forgotten a grinning, dirty, gesticulating Belgian who teaches cosmography, and says so often 'Ainsi donc! c'est bien compris! n'est-ce pas?' that he has earned himself the names of 'Ainsi donc' and 'Mr. Globes.' Amongst all the noise and bustle we have every possible opportunity of learning if we choose. I must except French, in which we make very little progress owing to the want of a governess. There are more English and Germans than French girls in the school, consequently very little French is spoken and that little is bad. I will write no more till I have seen the Brontës.

MARY TAYLOR.

March 26th, 1842.

DEAR ELLEN,—Mary Taylor says I am to write to you on this side of her letter. You will have heard that we have settled at Brussels instead of Lille. I think we have done well—we have got into a very good school—and are considerably comfortable. Just now we are at Kockleberg spending the day with Mary and Martha Taylor—to us such a happy day—for one's blood requires a little warming, it gets cold with living amongst strangers. You are not forgotten as you feared you would be. I will write another letter sometime and tell you how we are placed and amongst what sort of people. Mary and Martha are not changed; I have a catholic faith in them that they cannot change. Good-

bye. Remember me to your mother and Mercy. Write to me, Ellen, as soon as you can.

C. BRONTË.

April 4th, 1842.

DEAR ELLEN,—I am going to add my bit to this newspaper which you are going to have sometime, but no one knows when. We have had holiday for the last ten days, and I don't feel at all inclined to begin lessons again. I am tired of this everlasting German, and long for the day after to-morrow when our new French mistress will come and we shall continue our French. I have the cousin of the Mr. Jenkins who took tea with my brother Joe at Brookroyd sitting by me, chattering like a magpie, and hoping it may be true that her cousin will come to Brussels before July. Mary is on the other side of me staring into a German dictionary, and looking as fierce as a tiger. There is a very sweet, ladylike, elegant girl here, who has undertaken to civilise our *dragon*, and she is actually improving a little under her hands. Would you like to be here cracking your head with French and German? By the way, you must excuse me if I send you some unintelligible English, for in attempting to acquire other languages I have almost forgotten the little I knew of my own.

But I believe we are going to have prayers, so I must put this away, but I will write some more some day. Good-night.

MARTHA TAYLOR.

Lest you should think yourself forgotten, I take the first opportunity of sending you a letter. Keep up your spirits and look forward to crossing the Channel sometime. Send me particulars of your mother by my brothers and anything else you may have to say.

MARY TAYLOR.

April 5, '42.

And send me news about every one that I know. It is all the fashion for gentlemen to paint themselves. Shall I send you some paint for George? When you see my brother Joe, have the kindness to pull him his hair right well for me and give John a good pinch.

Remember me to your Mother and Sisters, and believe me to be still

MARTHA TAYLOR.

All the five letters or apparent letters printed above were contained on one large sheet of notepaper. We may

imagine the high spirits that prevailed when the three friends wrote thus in playful mood.

Letter 103

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

BRUSSELS, *May* 1842.

DEAR ELLEN,—It is the fashion nowadays for persons to send shoals of blank paper instead of letters to their friends in a foreign land.

I was twenty-six years old a week or two since, and at this ripe time of life I am a schoolgirl, a complete schoolgirl, and, on the whole, very happy in that capacity. It felt very strange at first to submit to authority instead of exercising it—to obey orders instead of giving them; but I like that state of things. I returned to it with the same avidity that a cow, that has long been kept on dry hay, returns to fresh grass. Don't laugh at my simile. It is natural to me to submit, and very unnatural to command.

This is a large school, in which there are about forty *externes* or day-pupils, and twelve *pensionnaires* or boarders. Madame Héger, the head, is a lady of precisely the same cast of mind, degree of cultivation, and quality of intellect as Miss Catherine Wooler. I think the severe points are a little softened, because she has not been disappointed, and consequently soured. In a word, she is a married instead of a maiden lady. There are three teachers in the school—Mademoiselle Blanche, Mademoiselle Sophie, and Mademoiselle Marie. The two first have no particular character. One is an old maid, and the other will be one. Mademoiselle Marie is talented and original, but of repulsive and arbitrary manners, which have made the whole school, except myself and Emily, her bitter enemies. No less than seven masters attend to teach the different branches of education—French, Drawing, Music, Singing, Writing, Arithmetic, and German. All in the house are Catholics except ourselves, one other girl, and the *gouvernante* of Madame's children, an Englishwoman, in rank something between a lady's-maid and a nursery governess. The difference in country and religion makes a broad line of demarcation between us and all the rest. We are completely isolated in the midst of numbers. Yet I think I am never unhappy; my present life is so delightful, so congenial to my own nature, compared with that of a governess. My time, constantly

occupied, passes too rapidly. Hitherto both Emily and I have had good health, and therefore we have been able to work well. There is one individual of whom I have not yet spoken—M. Héger, the husband of Madame. He is professor of rhetoric, a man of power as to mind, but very choleric and irritable in temperament; a little black being, with a face that varies in expression. Sometimes he borrows the lineaments of an insane tom-cat, sometimes those of a delirious hyena; occasionally, but very seldom, he discards these perilous attractions and assumes an air not above 100 degrees removed from mild and gentleman-like. He is very angry with me just at present, because I have written a translation which he chose to stigmatise as *peu correcte*. He did not tell me so, but wrote the accusation on the margin of my book, and asked in brief, stern phrase, how it happened that my compositions were always better than my translations? adding that the thing seemed to him inexplicable. The fact is, some weeks ago, in a high-flown humour, he forbade me to use either dictionary or grammar in translating the most difficult English compositions into French. This makes the task rather arduous, and compels me now and then to introduce an English word, which nearly plucks the eyes out of his head when he sees it. Emily and he don't draw well together at all. When he is very ferocious with me I cry; that sets all things straight. Emily works like a horse, and she has had great difficulties to contend with, far greater than I have had. Indeed, those who come to a French school for instruction ought previously to have acquired a considerable knowledge of the French language, otherwise they will lose a great deal of time, for the course of instruction is adapted to natives and not to foreigners; and in these large establishments they will not change their ordinary course for one or two strangers. The few private lessons M. Héger has vouchsafed to give us are, I suppose, to be considered a great favour, and I can perceive they have already excited much spite and jealousy in the school.

You will abuse this letter for being short and dreary, and there are a hundred things which I want to tell you, but I have not time. Brussels is a beautiful city. The Belgians hate the English. Their external morality is more rigid than ours. *Do* write to me and cherish Christian charity in your heart! Remember me to Mercy and your Mother, and believe me, my dear Ellen,—Yours, sundered by the sea, C. BRONTË.

Letter 104

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

BRUSSELS, —— 1842.

DEAR ELLEN,—I began seriously to think you had no particular intention of writing to me again. However, let me make no reproaches, thanking you for your letter. I consider it doubtful whether I shall come home in September or not. Madame Héger has made a proposal for both me and Emily to stay another half-year, offering to dismiss her English master, and take me as English teacher; also to employ Emily some part of each day in teaching music to a certain number of the pupils. For these services we are to be allowed to continue our studies in French and German, and to have board, etc., without paying for it; no salaries, however, are offered. The proposal is kind, and in a great selfish city like Brussels, and a great selfish school, containing nearly ninety pupils (boarders and day-pupils included), implies a degree of interest which demands gratitude in return. I am inclined to accept it. What think you? I don't deny I sometimes wish to be in England, or that I have brief attacks of home-sickness; but, on the whole, I have borne a very valiant heart so far; and I have been happy in Brussels, because I have always been fully occupied with the employments that I like. Emily is making rapid progress in French, German, music and drawing. Monsieur and Madame Héger begin to recognise the valuable parts of her character, under her singularities.

If the national character of the Belgians is to be measured by the character of most of the girls in this school, it is a character singularly cold, selfish, animal, and inferior. They are very mutinous and difficult for the teachers to manage; and their principles are rotten to the core. We avoid them, which is not difficult to do, as we have the brand of Protestantism and Anglicism upon us. People talk of the danger which Protestants expose themselves to in going to reside in Catholic countries, and thereby running the chance of changing their faith. My advice to all Protestants who are tempted to do anything so besotted as to turn Catholics is, to walk over the sea on to the Continent; to attend Mass sedulously for a time; to note well the mummeries thereof; also the idiotic, mercenary aspect of all the priests; and *then*, if they are still disposed to consider Papistry in any other light than a most feeble, childish piece of humbug, let them turn

Papists at once—that's all. I consider Methodism, Quakerism, and the extremes of High and Low Churchism foolish, but Roman Catholicism beats them all. At the same time, allow me to tell you that there are some Catholics who are as good as any Christians can be to whom the Bible is a sealed book, and much better than many Protestants.—Believe me present occasionally in spirit when absent in the flesh. C. B.

Mary and Martha Taylor apparently were home again in August as the following brief note implies. They returned to Brussels, however, and Martha died there in October.

Letter 105

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HUNSWORTH MILLS,
Friday, August 19, 1842.

MY DEAR ELLEN,—We have just returned from Leeds, where we have fixed that we will have the house warmed next Wednesday, and my cousins, my uncle, and my Aunt Sarah are coming over. . . . My brothers and I shall be exceedingly gratified if you, your sister Mercy, and your brothers will come to tea on that day to meet them. Now, will you come? or you will be stupid as you were about going to Brier Hall, and if you refuse you will make me seriously angry with you, and you had better not, or I will tell all kinds of things of you to Miss Brontë.

We leave here for Birmingham on Thursday next, so you must bring your letters with you.—I remain conditionally, yours truly,

MARTHA TAYLOR.

Merely because it comes here in order of date I give a glimpse of Branwell Brontë, who had made friends with one Francis H. Grundy, an engineer on the railway while he was engaged as booking-clerk at Luddenden Foot Station—Grundy says as station-master. Grundy had been one of the pioneers of the railways between Leeds and Bradford. His picture of the Brontë family is interesting though inaccurate :—

That Rector of Haworth little knew how to bring up and bring out his clever family, and the boy least of all. He was a hard,

matter-of-fact man. So the girls worked their own way to fame and death, the boy to death only! I knew them all. The father, upright, handsome, distantly courteous, white-haired, tall; knowing me as his son's friend, he would treat me in the grandisonian fashion, coming himself down to the little inn to invite me, a boy, up to his house, where I would be coldly uncomfortable until I could escape with Patrick Branwell to the moors. The daughters, distant and distrait, large of nose, small of figure, red of hair, prominent of spectacles; showing great intellectual development, but with eyes constantly cast down, very silent, painfully retiring. This was about the time of their first literary adventures, I suppose—say 1843 or 1844.[1]

When it is considered that the sisters had not red hair, that only one—Charlotte—wore spectacles, and that their 'literary adventures' did not begin until two or three years after this, it will be seen that Mr. Grundy is not a very accurate purveyor of information. But the following letters from Branwell to him give us a glimpse of yet another tragedy that affected the Brontë family in the autumn of 1842.

Letter 106

TO FRANCIS H. GRUNDY

HAWORTH, *9th June* 1842.

DEAR SIR,—Any feeling of disappointment which the perusal of your letter might otherwise have caused, was allayed by its kindly and considerate tone; but I should have been a fool, under present circumstances, to entertain any sanguine hopes respecting situations, etc. You ask me why I do not turn my attention elsewhere; and so I would have done, but that most of my relatives and more immediate connections are clergymen, or by a private life somewhat removed from this busy world. As for the Church—I have not one mental qualification, save, perhaps, hypocrisy, which would make me cut a figure in its pulpits. Mr. James Montgomery and another literary gentleman who have lately seen something of my 'head work' wish me to turn my

[1] *Pictures of the Past. Memoirs of Men I have Met, and Places I have Seen.* By Francis H. Grundy, C.E. Griffith and Farren 1879.

attention to literature, and along with that advice, they give me plenty of puff and praise. All very well, but I have little conceit of myself, and great desire for activity. You say that you write with feelings similar to those with which you last left me; keep them no longer. I trust I am somewhat changed, or should not be worth a thought; and though nothing could ever give me your buoyant spirits and an outward man corresponding therewith, I may, in dress and appearance, emulate something like ordinary decency. And now, wherever coming years may lead—Greenland's snows or sands of Afric—I trust, etc., PATRICK B. BRONTË.

Letter 107

TO FRANCIS H. GRUNDY

October 25th, 1842.

MY DEAR SIR,—There is no misunderstanding. I have had a long attendance at the death-bed of the Rev. Mr. Weightman, one of my dearest friends, and now I am attending at the death-bed of my aunt, who has been for twenty years as my mother. I expect her to die in a few hours.

As my sisters are far from home, I have had much on my mind, and these things must serve as an apology for what was never intended as neglect of your friendship to us.

I had meant not only to have written to you, but to the Rev. James Martineau, gratefully and sincerely acknowledging the receipt of his most kindly and truthful criticism—at least in advice, though too generous far in praise; but one sad ceremony must, I fear, be gone through first. Give my most sincere respects to Mr. Stephenson, and excuse this scrawl—my eyes are too dim with sorrow to see well.—Believe me, your not very happy but obliged friend and servant, P. B. BRONTË.

Letter 108

TO FRANCIS H. GRUNDY

29th October 1842.

MY DEAR SIR,—As I don't want to lose a real friend, I write in deprecation of the tone of your letter. Death only has made me neglectful of your kindness, and I have lately had so much experience with him, that your sister would not now blame me

for indulging in gloomy visions either of this world or another. I am incoherent, I fear, but I have been waking two nights witnessing such agonising suffering as I would not wish my worst enemy to endure; and I have now lost the guide and director of all the happy days connected with my childhood. I have suffered such sorrow since I last saw you at Haworth, that I do not now care if I were fighting in India or ——, since, when the mind is depressed, danger is the most effectual cure. But you don't like croaking, I know well, only I request you to understand from my two notes that I have not forgotten you, but myself.—Yours, etc.,

P. B. BRONTË.

Letter 109

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

11 RUE DE LA RÉGENCE, BRUSSELS,
October 30*th*, 1842.

MY DEAR ELLEN,—You will have heard by this time the end of poor Martha; and with my head full of this event and still having nothing to say upon it, or rather not feeling inclined to say it, I scarcely know why I write to you. But I don't wish you to think that this misfortune will make me forget you more than the rest did; having the opportunity of sending you a letter postage free, I just write to tell you I think of you. You will wish to hear the history of Martha's illness—I will give you it in a few months if you have not heard it then; till then you must excuse me. A thousand times I have reviewed the minutest circumstances of it, but I cannot without great difficulty give a regular account of them. There is nothing to regret, nothing to recall—not even Martha. She is better where she is. But when I recall the sufferings that have purified her, my heart aches—I can't help it, and every trivial accident, sad or pleasant, reminds me of her and of what she went through.

I am going to walk with Charlotte and Emily to the Protestant cemetery this afternoon (Sunday, 30th October). It is long since I have seen them, and we shall have much to say to each other. I am now staying with the Dixons in Brussels. I find them very different to what I expected. They are the most united, affectionate family I ever met with. They have taken me as one of themselves, and made me such a comfortable happy home that I should like to live here all my life.

This I could do if I had not a counter liking (so consistent we are) to go into Germany and another to live at Hunsworth. I have finally chosen to go to Germany—activity being in my opinion the most desirable state of existence both for my spirits, health, and advantage.

I shall finish my letter after I have seen Charlotte.

1st November 1842.

Well, I have seen her and Emily. We have walked about six miles to see the cemetery and the country round it. We then spent a pleasant evening with my cousins, and in presence of my uncle and Emily, one not speaking at all, the other once or twice.

I like to hear from you, and thank you much for your letter. Remember me to your sister Mercy and your mother, and to all who enquire about me, if you think they do it more from kindness than curiosity. To Miss Cockhill, Mary Carr, the Misses Wooler, particularly to Miss Wooler, Miss Bradbury, and the Healds.

MARY TAYLOR.

If this letter should not reach you for some time after the date, it will not be because it has been delayed on the road, but because an opportunity did not occur of sending it sooner by a private hand.

Mary Dixon wishes me to begin again to express her kind remembrances to you and your sister.

The culminating trouble for Charlotte and Emily was the death of their aunt, news of which reached them as they were preparing to start for England. Miss Branwell's death changed many things for her two nieces, and put each of them in possession of a small income. A perusal of her will is not without interest.

Extracted from the District Probate Registry at York
attached to Her Majesty's High Court of Justice.

Depending on the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost for peace here, and glory and bliss forever hereafter, I leave this my last Will and Testament: Should I die at Haworth, I request that my remains may be deposited in the church in that place as near as convenient to the remains of my dear sister; I moreover will that all my just debts and funeral expenses be paid out of my property, and that my funeral

shall be conducted in a moderate and decent manner. My Indian workbox I leave to my niece, Charlotte Brontë; my workbox with china top I leave to my niece, Emily Jane Brontë, together with my ivory fan; my Japan dressing-box I leave to my nephew, Patrick Branwell Brontë; to my niece Anne Brontë, I leave my watch with all that belongs to it; as also my eye-glass and its chain, my rings, silver-spoons, books, clothes, etc., etc., I leave to be divided between my above-named three nieces, Charlotte Brontë, Emily Jane Brontë, and Anne Brontë, according as their father shall think proper. And I will that all the money that shall remain, including twenty-five pounds sterling, being the part of the proceeds of the sale of my goods which belong to me in consequence of my having advanced to my sister Kingston the sum of twenty-five pounds in lieu of her share of the proceeds of my goods aforesaid, and deposited in the bank of Bolitho Sons and Co., Esqrs., of Chiandower, near Penzance, after the aforesaid sums and articles shall have been paid and deducted, shall be put into some safe bank or lent on good landed security, and there left to accumulate for the sole benefit of my four nieces, Charlotte Brontë, Emily Jane Brontë, Anne Brontë, and Elizabeth Jane Kingston; and this sum or sums, and whatever other property I may have, shall be equally divided between them when the youngest of them then living shall have arrived at the age of twenty-one years. And should any one or more of these my four nieces die, her or their part or parts shall be equally divided amongst the survivors; and if but one is left, all shall go to that one: And should they all die before the age of twenty-one years, all their parts shall be given to my sister, Anne Kingston; and should she die before that time specified, I will that all that was to have been hers shall be equally divided between all the surviving children of my dear brother and sisters. I appoint my brother-in-law, the Rev. P. Brontë, A.B., now Incumbent of Haworth, Yorkshire; the Rev. John Fennell, now Incumbent of Cross Stone, near Halifax; the Rev. Theodore Dury, Rector of Keighley, Yorkshire; and Mr. George Taylor of Stanbury, in the chapelry of Haworth aforesaid, my executors. Written by me, ELIZABETH BRANWELL, *and signed, sealed, and delivered on the* 30*th of April, in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and thirty-three,* ELIZABETH BRANWELL. *Witnesses present, William Brown, John Tootill, William Brown, Junr.*

The twenty-eighth day of December, 1842, *the Will of* ELIZABETH BRANWELL, *late of Haworth, in the parish of Bradford, in the county of York, spinster* (*having* bona notabilia *within*

the province of York), Deceased, was proved in the prerogative court of York by the oaths of the Reverend Patrick Brontë, clerk, brother-in-law; and George Taylor, two of the executors to whom administration was granted (the Reverend Theodore Dury, another of the executors, having renounced), they having been first sworn duly to administer.

Effects sworn under £1500.

Testatrix died 29th October 1842.

Letter 110

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *November 10th*, 1842.

MY DEAR ELLEN,—I was not yet returned to England when your letter arrived. We received the first news of aunt's illness, Wednesday, Nov. 2nd. We decided to come home directly. Next morning a second letter informed us of her death. We sailed from Antwerp on Sunday; we travelled day and night and got home on Tuesday morning—and of course the funeral and all was over. We shall see her no more. Papa is pretty well. We found Anne at home; she is pretty well also. You say you have had no letter from me for a long time. I wrote to you three weeks ago. When you answer this note, I will write to you more in detail. Martha Taylor's illness was unknown to me till the day before she died. I hastened to Kockleberg the next morning—unconscious that she was in great danger—and was told that it was finished. She had died in the night. Mary was taken away to Bruxelles. I have seen Mary frequently since. She is in no ways crushed by the event; but while Martha was ill she was to her more than a mother—more than a sister: watching, nursing, cherishing her so tenderly, so unweariedly. She appears calm and serious now: no bursts of violent emotion, no exaggeration of distress. I have seen Martha's grave—the place where her ashes lie in a foreign country. Aunt, Martha Taylor, and Mr. Weightman are now all gone; how dreary and void everything seems. Mr. Weightman's illness was exactly what Martha's was—he was ill the same length of time and died in the same manner. Aunt's disease was internal obstruction; she also was ill a fortnight.

Good-bye, my dear Ellen. C. BRONTË.

A few facts more about the first sojourn of Charlotte Brontë in Brussels we may learn from a letter written from New Zealand to Mrs. Gaskell by Mary Taylor.

Letter 111

TO MRS. GASKELL

The first part of her time at Brussels was not uninteresting. She spoke of new people and characters, and foreign ways of the pupils and teachers. She knew the hopes and prospects of the teachers, and mentioned one who was very anxious to marry, 'she was getting so old.' She used to get her father or brother (I forget which) to be the bearer of letters to different single men, who she thought might be persuaded to do her the favour, saying that her only resource was to become a sister of charity if her present employment failed, and that she hated the idea. Charlotte naturally looked with curiosity to people of her own condition. This woman almost frightened her. 'She declares there is nothing she can turn to, and laughs at the idea of delicacy—and she is only ten years older than I am!' I did not see the connection till she said, 'Well, Polly, I should hate being a sister of charity; I suppose that would shock some people, but I should.' I thought she would have as much feeling as a nurse as most people, and more than some. She said she did not know how people could bear the constant pressure of misery, and never to change except to a new form of it. It would be impossible to keep one's natural feelings. I promised her a better destiny than to go begging any one to marry her, or to lose her natural feelings as a sister of charity. She said, 'My youth is leaving me; I can never do better than I have done, and I have done nothing yet.' At such times she seemed to think that most human beings were destined by the pressure of worldly interests to lose one faculty and feeling after another 'till they went dead altogether. I hope I shall be put in my grave as soon as I 'm dead; I don't want to walk about so.' Here we always differed. I thought the degradation of nature she feared was a consequence of poverty, and that she should give her attention to earning money. Sometimes she admitted this, but could find no means of earning money. At others she seemed afraid of letting her thoughts dwell on the subject, saying it brought on the worst palsy of all. Indeed, in

her position, nothing less than entire constant absorption in petty money matters could have scraped together a provision.

Of course artists and authors stood high with Charlotte, and the best thing after their works would have been their company. She used very inconsistently to rail at money and money-getting, and then wish she was able to visit all the large towns in Europe, see all the sights, and know all the celebrities. This was her notion of literary fame—a passport to the society of clever people. . . . When she had become acquainted with the people and ways at Brussels her life became monotonous, and she fell into the same hopeless state as at Miss Wooler's, though in a less degree. I wrote to her, urging her to go home or elsewhere; she had got what she wanted (French), and there was at least novelty in a new place, if no improvement. That if she sank into deeper gloom she would soon not have energy to go, and she was too far from home for her friends to hear of her condition and order her home as they had done from Miss Wooler's. She wrote that I had done her a great service, that she would certainly follow my advice, and was much obliged to me. I have often wondered at this letter. Though she patiently tolerated advice she could always quietly put it aside, and do as she thought fit. More than once afterwards she mentioned the 'service' I had done her. She sent me £10 to New Zealand, on hearing some exaggerated accounts of my circumstances, and told me she hoped it would come in seasonably; it was a debt she owed me 'for the service I had done her.' I should think £10 was a quarter of her income. The 'service' was mentioned as an apology, but kindness was the real motive.

As the two girls were returning home from Brussels M. Héger wrote a letter to their father.

Letter 112

AU RÉVÉREND MONSIEUR BRONTË, PASTEUR ÉVANGÉLIQUE, ETC., ETC.

SAMEDI, 5 *Obre.*

Monsieur,—Un événement bien triste décide mesdemoiselles vos filles à retourner brusquement en Angleterre. Ce départ qui nous afflige beaucoup a cependant ma complète approbation; il est bien naturel qu'elles cherchent à vous consoler de ce que le

ciel vient de vous ôter, en se serrant autour de vous, pour mieux vous faire apprécier ce que le ciel vous a donné et ce qu'il vous laisse encore. J'espère que vous me pardonnerez, monsieur, de profiter de cette circonstance pour vous faire parvenir l'expression de mon respect; je n'ai pas l'honneur de vous connaître personnellement, et cependant j'éprouve pour votre personne un sentiment de sincère vénération, car en jugeant un père de famille par ses enfants on ne risque pas de se tromper, et sous ce rapport l'éducation et les sentiments que nous avons trouvés dans mesdemoiselles vos filles n'ont pu que nous donner une très haute idée de votre mérite et de votre caractère. Vous apprendrez sans doute avec plaisir que vos enfants ont fait du progrès très remarquable dans toutes les branches de l'enseignement, et que ces progrès sont entièrement dûs à leur amour pour le travail et à leur persévérance; nous n'avons eu que bien peu à faire avec de pareilles élèves; leur avancement est votre œuvre bien plus que la nôtre; nous n'avons pas eu à leur apprendre le prix du temps et de l'instruction, elles avaient appris tout cela dans la maison paternelle, et nous n'avons eu, pour notre part, que le faible mérite de diriger leurs efforts et de fournir un aliment convenable à la louable activité que vos filles ont puisée dans votre exemple et dans vos leçons. Puissent les éloges mérités que nous donnons à vos enfants vous être de quelque consolation dans le malheur qui vous afflige; c'est là notre espoir en vous écrivant, et ce sera, pour mesdemoiselles Charlotte et Emily, une douce et belle récompense de leurs travaux.

En perdant nos deux chères élèves, nous ne devons pas vous cacher que nous éprouvons à la fois et du chagrin et de l'inquiétude; nous sommes affligés parce que cette brusque séparation vient briser l'affection presque paternelle que nous leur avons vouée, et notre peine s'augmente à la vue de tant de travaux interrompus, de tant de choses bien commencées, et qui ne demandent que quelque temps encore pour être menés à bonne fin. Dans un an chacune de vos demoiselles eût été entièrement prémunie contre les éventualités de l'avenir; chacune d'elles acquérait à la fois et l'instruction et la science d'enseignement; Mlle Emily allait apprendre le piano; recevoir des leçons du meilleur professeur que nous ayons en Belgique, et déjà elle avait elle-même de petites élèves; elle perdait donc à la fois un reste d'ignorance et un reste plus gênant encore de timidité; Mlle Charlotte commençait à donner des leçons en français, et d'ac-

quérir cette assurance, cet aplomb si nécessaire dans l'enseignement ; encore un an tout au plus et l'œuvre était achevée et bien achevée. Alors nous aurions pu, si cela vous eût convenu, offrir à mesdemoiselles vos filles ou du moins à l'une des deux une position qui eût été dans ses goûts, et qui lui eût donné cette douce indépendance si difficile à trouver pour une jeune personne. Ce n'est pas, croyez-le bien, monsieur, ce n'est pas ici pour nous une question d'intérêt personnel, c'est une question d'affection ; vous me pardonnerez si nous vous parlons de vos enfants, si nous nous occupons de leur avenir, comme si elles faisaient partie de notre famille ; leurs qualités personnelles, leur bon vouloir, leur zèle extrême sont les seules causes qui nous poussent à nous hasarder de la sorte. Nous savons, monsieur, que vous pèserez plus mûrement et plus sagement que nous la conséquence qu'aurait pour l'avenir une interruption complète dans les études de vos deux filles ; vous déciderez ce qu'il faut faire, et vous nous pardonnerez notre franchise, si vous daignez considérer que le motif qui nous fait agir est une affection bien désintéressée et qui s'affligerait beaucoup de devoir déjà se résigner à n'être plus utile à vos chers enfants.

Agréez, je vous prie, monsieur, l'expression respectueuse de mes sentiments de haute considération. C. HÉGER.

All things considered, by the light of this letter, there was nothing strange in the fact that Charlotte should determine to return once more to Brussels, that she should aspire to a greater proficiency in many of the subjects which she had begun to study under such satisfactory auspices. A quiet Christmas at Haworth with her father, brother and sisters, and Charlotte returned to Brussels. One or two letters to her friend Ellen Nussey fill up the intervening days.

Letter 113

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *November 20th*, 1842.

DEAR ELLEN,—I hope your brother George is sufficiently recovered now to dispense with your constant attendance. Papa desires his compliments to you, and says he should be very glad

if you could give us your company at Haworth a little while. Can you come on Friday next? I mention so early a day because Anne leaves us to return to York on Monday, and she wishes very much to see you before her departure. I think George is too good-natured to object to your coming. There is little enough pleasure in this world, and it would be truly unkind to deny to you and me that of meeting again after so long a separation. Do not fear to find us melancholy or depressed. We are all much as usual. You will see no difference from our former demeanour. Send an immediate answer.

My love and best wishes to your sister and mother.

C. Brontë.

Letter 114

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

November 25*th*, 1842.

My dear Ellen,—I hope that invitation of yours was given in real earnest, for I intend to accept it. I wish to see you, and as in a few weeks I shall probably again leave England, I will not be too delicate and ceremonious and so let the present opportunity pass.

Something says to me that it will not be too convenient to have a guest at Brookroyd while there is an invalid there. However, I listen to no such suggestions. I find, however, that I cannot come on Monday, because Anne's present arrangements will not suit that day. She leaves Haworth on Tuesday at six o'clock in the morning, and we should reach Bradford at half-past eight—an early hour for you to be there with the gig.

If Tuesday will not suit you write *immediately* and tell me so. The circumstances of its being Leeds market-day may perhaps render it inconvenient. If so, I will defer my visit to any day you please.

There are many reasons why I should have preferred your coming to Haworth; but as it appears there are always obstacles which prevent that—I 'll break through ceremony, or pride, or whatever it is, and like Mahomet go to the mountain which won't or can't come to me.

The coach stops at the Bowling-Green Inn—in Bradford.

Give my love to Mercy and your Mother. C. Brontë.

Letter 115

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

No date.

ANN wants shaking to be put out about his appearance—what does it matter whether her husband dines in a dress-coat or a market-coat, provided there be worth and honesty and a clean shirt underneath?

I should like to make Ann some small present. Give me a hint what would be acceptable.

I suppose you have not yet heard anything more of poor Mr. Graham, since you do not mention him. Does Rosy Ringrose continue to improve? How are Mrs. Atkinson and Mrs. Charles Carr? I am glad to hear that Miss Heald continues tolerable—but, as you say, it really seems wonderful. I hope Mercy will derive benefit from her excursion.

Good-bye for the present. Write to me again soon.

C. B.

With what remains after paying for the furs you must buy something for yourself to make your bridesmaid gear.

Letter 116

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *January* 10*th*, 1843.

DEAR NELL,—It is a singular state of things to be obliged to write and have nothing worth reading to say. I am glad you got home safe. You are an excellent good girl for writing to me two letters, especially as they were such long ones. Branwell wants to know why you carefully exclude all mention of him when you particularly send your regards to every other member of the family. He desires to know whether and in what he has offended you, or whether it is considered improper for a young lady to mention the gentlemen of a house. We have been one walk on the moors since you left. We have been to Keighley, where we met a person of our acquaintance, who uttered an interjection of astonishment on meeting us, and when he could get his breath, informed us that he had heard I was dead and buried. You say nothing about Mr. ——'s pocket-book. Has he

found it? I don't know what to think about Joe coming so often to Brookroyd. There exists a tragedy entitled *The Rival Brothers.* I have got down into the realms of nonsense, so I'll drop it. I have been as solid as a large dumpling since you left. F——'s note I return because it must be precious. Anne's I keep.

Alas for O. P. V.! Alas! Alas! C. BRONTË.

Letter 117

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *January,* — 1843.

DEAR NELL,—My striped dress is not cut crossways. I am much obliged to you for transferring the roll of muslin. I found the brush under the sofa, and last Saturday I found the bustle—for which you deserve smothering.

I will deliver Branwell your message. You have left your Bible; how can I send it? I cannot tell precisely what day I shall leave home, but it will be the last week in this month. Are you going with me?

I admire exceedingly the costume you have chosen to appear in at the Birstall rout. I think you say pink petticoat, black jacket, and a wreath of roses—beautiful! For a change I would advise a black coat—velvet stock and waistcoat—white pantaloons and smart boots!

I have addressed you in this note as plain Ellen—for though I know it will soon be Mrs. J. Taylor—I can't for the life of me tell whether the initial J. stands for John or Joe. It is a complete enigma. When I have time I mean to write Mr. Vincent's elegy. Poor man! the manufacturers are beating him hollow.

My address is—Miss Brontë, Chez M^de^ Héger-Parent, No. 32 Rue d'Isabelle, Bruxelles, Belgium.

Write to me again; that's a good girl. Very soon—in a fortnight, you know—there will be no more scribbling.

Respectful remembrances to your mother and Mercy.

C. BRONTË.

CHAPTER XII

SECOND SOJOURN IN BRUSSELS

MUCH needless ink has been wasted over a discussion of the causes which led Charlotte Brontë to return to Brussels alone. The village gossips of that day of course suggested that there was a lover there. The city gossips of a later day have insisted that M. Constantin Héger was the hero of this episode. If the fictitious characters of an author's creation are to be taken for realities in his or her eyes, there is sufficient excuse for this view. Paul Emanuel of *Villette* was undoubtedly M. Héger in many pleasant and unpleasant characteristics, and if Lucy Snowe be assumed to be Charlotte Brontë, and here also there were certain indisputable points of likeness—then the passionate love that Charlotte Brontë felt for her professor is beyond dispute. But this attitude towards an artist's work is, as it seems to me, a very mean one on the part of the critics. It is in a way an act of treachery to a great writer's memory to attempt to pry too closely into his heart. A perusal of these letters, now brought together for the first time with any completeness, reveals in Charlotte Brontë an entirely good and honourable nature. If there were moments during that sad year at Brussels when the neurotic little woman permitted herself to think of the might-have-beens of life, to imagine to herself what a wife she would have made to the brilliant little professor, she kept all such thoughts well in subjection, and with speculation concerning them the world has nothing to do. The censorious reader may discover in Charlotte Brontë an occasional aptitude for a too severe judgment on men and women, a cruel severity

towards the manners of curates—faults she had, as all of us have; but her inherent purity of nature cannot for a moment be impugned. That is granted, I admit, by the successive writers who have emphasised this episode in Charlotte Brontë's life — by Sir Wemyss Reid, Mr. Augustine Birrell, Dr. Robertson Nicoll,[1] and Mr. Angus MacKay. In a striking essay[2] Mr. MacKay has summarised the point of view of those who think that all the passionate devotion that Lucy Snowe feels for her professor Paul Emanuel is but a reflection of a similar devotion felt by Charlotte Brontë for Constantin Héger. A few lines contained in a letter to Ellen Nussey are most relied upon for this view:—

I returned to Brussels after aunt's death against my conscience, prompted by what then seemed an irresistible impulse. I was punished for my selfish folly by a withdrawal for more than two years of happiness and peace of mind.

Miss Nussey and Mr. Nicholls interpreted this to mean that she had left her father to over-conviviality which her influence would have modified, and that her brother took some further steps towards the precipice over which he was destined to fall. Mr. MacKay and the other critics discover a secret in her life:

We see her sore wounded in her affections, but unconquerable in her will. The discovery . . . does not degrade the noble figure we know so well; it adds to it a pathetic significance. The moral of her greatest works—that conscience must reign absolute at whatever cost—acquires a greater force when we realise how she herself came through the furnace of temptation with marks of torture on her, but with no stain on her soul.

To continue the discussion of this subject is scarcely within my province. Madame Héger and her family, it must be admitted, have kept the impression afloat that is

[1] See his two brilliant essays, the one as an Introduction to *Jane Eyre* (Hodder and Stoughton), the other in Chambers's *Cyclopædia of English Literature.*

[2] *The Brontës, Fact and Fiction*, by Angus M. MacKay. Service and Paton, 1897.

reflected in Mr. MacKay's view. Madame Héger refused to see Mrs. Gaskell when she called upon her in the Rue d'Isabelle; and her daughters will tell you that their father broke off his correspondence with Miss Brontë because his favourite English pupil showed an undue extravagance of devotion. 'Her attachment after her return to Yorkshire,' to quote a recent essay on the subject, 'was expressed in her frequent letters in a tone that her Brussels friends considered it not only prudent but kind to check. She was warned by them that the exaltation these letters betrayed needed to be toned down and replaced by what was reasonable. She was further advised to write only once in six months, and then to limit the subject of her letters to her own health and that of her family, and to a plain account of her circumstances and occupation.'[1] Now to all this I do not hesitate to give an emphatic contradiction, a contradiction based upon the only independent authority available. Miss Lætitia Wheelwright and her sisters saw much of Charlotte Brontë during this second sojourn in Brussels, and they have a quite different tale to tell.

Madame Héger did indeed hate Charlotte Brontë in her later years. This is not unnatural when we remember how that unfortunate woman has been gibbeted for all time in the characters of Mlle. Zoraïde Reuter and Madame Beck. But in justice to the creator of these scathing portraits, it may be mentioned that Charlotte Brontë took every precaution to prevent *Villette* from obtaining currency in the city which inspired it. She told Miss Wheelwright, with whom naturally, on her visits to London, she often discussed the Brussels life, that she had received a promise that there should be no translation, and that the book would never appear in the French language. One cannot therefore fix upon Charlotte Brontë any responsibility for the circumstance that immediately

[1] 'The Brontes at Brussels,' by Frederika Macdonald.—*The Woman at Home*, July 1894

after her death the novel appeared in the only tongue understood by Madame Héger.

Miss Wheelwright informs me that Charlotte Brontë did certainly admire M. Héger, as did all his pupils, very heartily. Charlotte's first impression, indeed, was not flattering: 'He is professor of rhetoric, a man of power as to mind, but very choleric and irritable in temperament; a little black being, with a face that varies in expression. Sometimes he borrows the lineaments of an insane tom-cat, sometimes those of a delirious hyena; occasionally, but very seldom, he discards these perilous attractions and assumes an air not above 100 degrees removed from mild and gentleman-like.' But he was particularly attentive to Charlotte; and as he was the first really intelligent man she had met, the first man, that is to say, with intellectual interests—for we know how much she despised the curates of her neighbourhood—she rejoiced at every opportunity of doing verbal battle with him, for Charlotte inherited, it may be said, the Irish love of debate. Some time after Charlotte had returned to England, and when in the height of her fame, she met her Brussels school-fellow in London. Miss Wheelwright asked her whether she still corresponded with M. Héger. Charlotte replied that she had discontinued to do so. M. Héger had mentioned in one letter that his wife did not like the correspondence, and he asked her therefore to address her letters to the Royal Athénée, where, as I have mentioned, he gave lessons to the boys. 'I stopped writing at once,' Charlotte told her friend. 'I would not have dreamt of writing to him when I found it was disagreeable to his wife; certainly I would not write unknown to her.' 'She said this,' Miss Wheelwright adds, 'with the sincerity of manner which characterised her every utterance, and I would sooner have doubted myself than her.'[1]

[1] M. and Mme. Héger celebrated their golden wedding in 1888, but Mme. Héger died the next year. M. Constantin Héger lived to be eighty-seven years of age, dying

At first, however, her sojourn was not solitary. Charlotte had not visited the Wheelwrights in the Rue Royale during her first visit to Brussels. She had found the companionship of Emily all-sufficing, and Emily, as I have hinted, was not sufficiently popular with the Wheelwrights to have made her a welcome guest. They admitted her cleverness, but they considered her hard, unsympathetic, and abrupt in manner. We know that she was self-contained and home-sick, pining for her native moors. This was not evident to a girl of ten, the youngest of the Wheelwright children, who was compelled to receive daily a music lesson from Emily in her play-hours. When, however, Charlotte came back to Brussels alone she was heartily welcomed into two or three English families, including those of Mr. Dixon, of the Rev. Mr. Jenkins, and of Dr. Wheelwright. With the Wheelwright children she sometimes spent the Sunday, and with them she occasionally visited the English Episcopal Church which the Wheelwrights attended, and of which the clergyman was a Mr. Drury. When Dr. Wheelwright took his wife for a Rhine trip in May he left his four children — one little girl had died at Brussels, aged seven, in the preceding November—in the care of Madame Héger at the Pensionnat, and under the immediate supervision of Charlotte.

At this period there was plenty of cheerfulness in her life. She was learning German. She was giving English lessons to M. Héger and to his brother-in-law,

at 72 Rue Nettoyer, Brussels, on the 6th of May 1896. He was born in Brussels in 1809, took part in the Belgian revolution of 1830, and fought in the war of independence against the Dutch. He was twice married, and it was his second wife who was associated with Charlotte Brontë. She started the school in the Rue d'Isabelle, and M. Héger took charge of the upper French classes. In an obituary article written by M. Colin of *L'Étoile Belge* in *The Sketch* (June 5, 1896), which was revised by Dr. Héger, the only son of M. Héger, it is stated that Charlotte Brontë was piqued at being refused permission to return to the Pensionnat a third time, and that *Villette* was her revenge. We know that this was not the case. The Pensionnat Héger was removed in 1894 to the Avenue Louise. The building in the Rue d'Isabelle has been greatly altered.

M. Chapelle. She went to the Carnival, and described it as 'animating to see the immense crowds and the general gaiety.' Her letters are not at first unduly depressing.

We owe to Mrs. Gaskell a good account of Charlotte Brontë's second excursion to Brussels :—

Her journey thither was rather disastrous. She had to make her way alone; and the train from Leeds to London, which should have reached Euston Square early in the afternoon, was so much delayed that it did not get in till ten at night. She had intended to seek out the Chapter Coffee-house, where she had stayed before, and which would have been near the place where the steamboats lay; but she appears to have been frightened by the idea of arriving at an hour which, to Yorkshire notions, was so late and unseemly; and taking a cab, therefore, at the station, she drove straight to the London Bridge Wharf, and desired a waterman to row her to the Ostend packet, which was to sail the next morning. She described to me, pretty much as she has since described it in *Villette*, her sense of loneliness, and yet her strange pleasure in the excitement of the situation, as in the dead of that winter's night she went swiftly over the dark river to the black hull's side, and was at first refused leave to ascend to the deck. 'No passengers might sleep on board,' they said, with some appearance of disrespect. She looked back to the lights and subdued noises of London—that 'Mighty Heart' in which she had no place—and, standing up in the rocking boat, she asked to speak to some one in authority on board the packet. He came, and her quiet, simple statement of her wish, and her reason for it, quelled the feeling of sneering distrust in those who had first heard her request; and impressed the authority so favourably that he allowed her to come on board, and take possession of a berth. The next morning she sailed; and at seven on Sunday evening she reached the Rue d'Isabelle once more, having only left Haworth on Friday morning at an early hour.

Her salary was 16*l.* a year; out of which she had to pay for her German lessons, for which she was charged as much (the lessons being probably rated by time) as when Emily learnt with her and divided the expense, viz. ten francs a month. By Miss Brontë's own desire she gave her English lessons in the *classe*, or

schoolroom, without the supervision of Madame or M. Héger. They offered to be present, with a view to maintain order among the unruly Belgian girls; but she declined this, saying that she would rather enforce discipline by her own manner and character than be indebted for obedience to the presence of a *gendarme*. She ruled over a new schoolroom, which had been built on the space in the playground adjoining the house. Over that First Class she was *surveillante* at all hours; and henceforward she was called *Mademoiselle* Charlotte by M. Héger's orders. She continued her own studies, principally attending to German and to Literature; and every Sunday she went alone to the German and English chapels. Her walks too were solitary, and principally taken in the *allée défendue*, where she was secure from intrusion. The solitude was a perilous luxury to one of her temperament, so liable as she was to morbid and acute mental suffering.[1]

Letter 118

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

BRUSSELS, *January 30th*, 1843.

DEAR ELLEN,—I left Leeds for London last Friday at nine o'clock; owing to delay we did not reach London till ten at night —two hours after time. I took a cab the moment I arrived at Euston Square, and went forthwith to London Bridge Wharf. The packet lay off that wharf, and I went on board the same night. Next morning we sailed. We had a prosperous and speedy voyage, and landed at Ostend at seven o'clock next morning. I took the train at twelve and reached Rue d'Isabelle at seven in the evening. Madame Héger received me with great kindness. I am still tired with the continued excitement of three days' travelling. I had no accident, but of course some anxiety. Miss Dixon called this afternoon. Mary Taylor had told her I should be in Brussels the last week in January. You can tell Joe Taylor she looks very elegant and ladylike. I am going there on Sunday, D.V. Address—Miss Brontë, Chez Mme. Héger, 32 Rue d'Isabelle, Bruxelles.—Good-bye, dear. C. B.

[1] *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, by Mrs. Gaskell, Haworth Edition, pp. 252-3.

Letter 119

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

[GERMANY], *Feb.* 16, 1843.

DEAR ELLEN,—Your descriptions and opinions of the Miss Woolers, etc. etc., are more interesting than you imagine. Why do you not send me more of them? It is something very interesting to me [to] hear the remarks, exclamations, etc., that people make when they see any one from 'foreign parts.' I know well how you would spend the month you talk of when Miss Brontë was with you, and how you would discuss all imaginable topics and all imaginable people all day and half the night. Tell me something about Emily Brontë. I can't imagine how the newly acquired qualities can fit in, in the same head and heart that is occupied by the old ones. I imagine Emily turning over prints or 'taking wine' with any stupid pup and preserving her temper and politeness! Do you know, your specimens of 'people with good taste' who admire *The Sea* shocks me by its vulgarity. The Sea is but a simple air! You should admire elaborate fantasias made on elaborate subjects, that want three hands or twelve fingers to play them when you are left to invent now and then a 'brilliant appogiatura, cadence, harfenspiel, or what not, to modulate through the fifth into the next key, or from a minor seventh close to a'—the devil knows what! If you can't understand it all—remember I've been learning German—and how is it possible to keep one's brain clear in this land of Swedenborg, philosophy, abstract ideas, and—*cabbage*? This last word is a literal translation of a German one, always applied to anything very confused—my letter, for instance. However, I thrive with it all. I am decidedly better, better than I have been since I left England. Brussels, or perhaps my moral condition there, did not agree with me. I felt overpowered with weakness; now I am cheerful and active. Do not think if I don't write to you often that I forget you. I write a public letter, which I hope you see; and when I have written all the news I have, what can I put in your letter? I will wait a day or two, and if I find a great secret I will put it at the bottom of this page.

Feb. 18th

I find nothing to-day that I have not said in the public letter, and I must close my packet to-day for fear an *estafette* comes to know why I don't write. I have heard from Charlotte since her arrival; she seems *content* at least, but fear her sister's absence will have a bad effect. When people have so little amusement they cannot afford to lose *any*. However, we shall see. Present my remembrances to Miss Heald if she sent any to me, and I have really forgotten, and your letters are so abominably written that I cannot afford time to read it over again. Cannot you take pains and write neatly as I do? I fully understand your regrets at being forced to remain at home, but there is always your Mother for a reason, and perhaps if you left her you might regret as much that you had not remained by her. Remember me to her and your sister, Miss Wooler, and the Cockhills.

MARY TAYLOR.

Letter 120

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

BRUSSELS, *March* 6, 1843.

DEAR NELL,—Whether you received my last billet or not I do not know, but as an opportunity offers of despatching to you another I will avail myself of it.

I am settled by this time, of course. I am not too much overloaded with occupation; and besides teaching English I have time to improve myself in German. I ought to consider myself well off, and to be thankful for my good fortune. I hope I am thankful; and if I could always keep up my spirits, and never feel lonely, or long for companionship, or friendship, or whatever they call it, I should do very well. As I told you before, M. and Madame Héger are the only two persons in the house for whom I really experience regard and esteem, and, of course, I cannot always be with them, nor even often. They told me, when I first returned, that I was to consider their sitting-room my sitting-room also, and to go there whenever I was not engaged in the schoolroom. This, however, I cannot do. In the daytime it is a public room, where music masters and mistresses are constantly passing in and out; and in the evening I will not and ought not to intrude

on M. and Madame Héger and their children. Thus I am a good deal by myself, out of school hours; but that does not signify. I now regularly give English lessons to M. Héger and his brother-in-law, M. Chapelle. M. Héger's first wife was sister of M. Chapelle's present wife. They get on with wonderful rapidity, especially the first. He already begins to speak English very decently. If you could see and hear the efforts I make to teach them to pronounce like Englishmen, and their unavailing attempts to imitate, you would laugh to all eternity.

The Carnival is just over, and we have entered upon the gloom and abstinence of Lent. The first day of Lent we had coffee without milk for breakfast; vinegar and vegetables, with a very little salt fish, for dinner; and bread for supper. The Carnival was nothing but masking and mummery. M. Héger took me and one of the pupils into the town to see the masks. It was animating to see the immense crowds, and the general gaiety, but the masks were nothing. I have been twice to the Dixons. They are very kind to me. This letter will probably go by Mr. Tom. Miss Dixon is certainly an elegant and accomplished person. When she leaves Bruxelles I shall have nowhere to go. I shall be very sorry to lose her society. I hear that Mary W. is going to be married, and that Mr. J. Taylor has been and is very poorly. I have had two letters from Mary. She does not tell me she has been ill, and she does not complain; but her letters are not the letters of a person in the enjoyment of great happiness. She has nobody to be as good to her as M. Héger is to me; to lend her books, to converse with her sometimes, etc. Tell me if any chances or changes have happened.

Good-bye. When I say so it seems to me that you will hardly hear me; all the waves of the Channel heaving and roaring between must deaden the sound. Good-bye. C. B.

Letter 121

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

BRUSSELS, *April 1st*, 1843.

DEAR ELLEN,—That last letter of yours merits a good dose of panegyric—it was both long and interesting; send me quickly such another, longer still if possible. You will have heard of

Mary Taylor's resolute and intrepid proceedings. Her public letters will have put you in possession of all details—nothing is left for me to say except perhaps to express my opinion upon it. I have turned the matter over on all sides, and really I cannot consider it otherwise than as very rational. Mind, I did not jump to this opinion at once, but was several days before I formed it conclusively.

Is there any talk of your coming to Brussels? During the bitter cold weather we had through February, and the principal part of March, I did not regret that you had not accompanied me. If I had seen you shivering as I shivered myself, if I had seen your hands and feet as red and swelled as mine were, my discomfort would just have been doubled. I can do very well under this sort of thing; it does not fret me; it only makes me numb and silent; but if you were to pass a winter in Belgium you would be ill. However, more genial weather is coming now, and I wish you were here. Yet I never have pressed you, and never would press you too warmly to come. There are privations and humiliations to submit to; there is monotony and uniformity of life; and, above all, there is a constant sense of solitude in the midst of numbers. The Protestant, the foreigner, is a solitary being, whether as teacher or pupil. I do not say this by way of complaining of my own lot; for though I acknowledge that there are certain disadvantages in my present position, what position on earth is without them? And, whenever I turn back to compare what I am with what I was—my place here with my place at Mrs. Sidgwick's or Mrs. White's—I am thankful. There was an observation in your last letter which excited, for a moment, my wrath. At first I thought it would be folly to reply to it, and I would let it die. Afterwards I determined to give one answer, once for all. 'Three or four people,' it seems, 'have the idea that the future *époux* of Mademoiselle Brontë is on the Continent.' These people are wiser than I am. They could not believe that I crossed the sea merely to return as teacher to Madame Héger's. I must have some more powerful motive than respect for my master and mistress, gratitude for their kindness, etc., to induce me to refuse a salary of 50*l.* in England and accept one of 16*l.* in Belgium. I must, forsooth, have some remote hope of entrapping a husband somehow, or somewhere. If these charitable people knew the total seclusion of the life I lead—that I never exchange a word with any other man than Monsieur Héger, and seldom

indeed with him—they would, perhaps, cease to suppose that any such chimerical and groundless notion had influenced my proceedings. Have I said enough to clear myself of so silly an imputation? Not that it is a crime to marry, or a crime to wish to be married; but it is an imbecility, which I reject with contempt, for women, who have neither fortune nor beauty, to make marriage the principal object of their wishes and hopes, and the aim of all their actions; not to be able to convince themselves that they are unattractive, and that they had better be quiet, and think of other things than wedlock. I hope sincerely that all at Brookroyd are well. Remember me to your Mother and Mary. Any news of Ann yet? Good-bye. Write to me soon, nicely and pleasantly. Don't cut me up with any second-hand nonsense.—Yours, C. B.

Letter 122

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

May —, '43.

DEAR MISS NUSSEY,—I should be wanting in common civility if I did not thank you for your kindness in letting me know of an opportunity to send postage free.

I have written as you directed, though if next Tuesday means to-morrow, I fear it will be too late to go with Mr. ——. Charlotte has never mentioned a word about coming home. If you would go over for half a year, perhaps you might be able to bring her back with you, otherwise she might vegetate there till the age of Methusaleh for mere lack of courage to face the voyage.

All here are in good health; so was Anne according to her last account. The holidays will be here in a week or two, and then, if she be willing, I will get her to write you a proper letter, a feat that I have never performed.—With love and good wishes,

EMILY J. BRONTË.

Letter 123

TO BRANWELL BRONTË

BRUSSELS, *May 1st*, 1843.

DEAR BRANWELL,—I hear you have written a letter to me. This letter, however, as usual, I have never received, which I am

exceedingly sorry for, as I have wished very much to hear from you. Are you sure that you put the right address and that you paid the English postage, 1s. 6d.? Without that, letters are never forwarded. I heard from papa a day or two since. All appears to be going on reasonably well at home. I grieve only that Emily is so solitary; but, however, you and Anne will soon be returning for the holidays, which will cheer the house for a time. Are you in better health and spirits, and does Anne continue to be pretty well? I understand papa has been to see you. Did he seem cheerful and well? Mind when you write to me you answer these questions, as I wish to know. Also give me a detailed account as to how you get on with your pupil and the rest of the family. I have received a general assurance that you do well and are in good odour, but I want to know particulars.

As for me, I am very well and wag on as usual. I perceive, however, that I grow exceedingly misanthropic and sour. You will say that this is no news, and that you never knew me possessed of the contrary qualities—philanthropy and sugariness. *Das ist wahr* (which being translated means, that is true); but the fact is, the people here are no go whatsoever. Amongst 120 persons which compose the daily population of this house, I can discern only one or two who deserve anything like regard. This is not owing to foolish fastidiousness on my part, but to the absence of decent qualities on theirs. They have not intellect or politeness or good-nature or good-feeling. They are nothing. I don't hate them—hatred would be too warm a feeling. They have no sensations themselves and they excite none. But one wearies from day to day of caring nothing, fearing nothing, liking nothing, hating nothing, being nothing, doing nothing—yes, I teach and sometimes get red in the face with impatience at their stupidity. But don't think I ever scold or fly into a passion. If I spoke warmly, as warmly as I sometimes used to do at Roe Head, they would think me mad. Nobody ever gets into a passion here. Such a thing is not known. The phlegm that thickens their blood is too gluey to boil. They are very false in their relations with each other, but they rarely quarrel, and friendship is a folly they are unacquainted with. The black Swan, M. Héger, is the only sole veritable exception to this rule (for Madame, always cool and always reasoning, is not quite an exception). But I rarely speak to Monsieur now, for not being a pupil I have little or nothing to do with him. From time to time he shows his

kind-heartedness by loading me with books, so that I am still indebted to him for all the pleasure or amusement I have. Except for the total want of companionship I have nothing to complain of. I have not too much to do, sufficient liberty, and I am rarely interfered with. I lead an easeful, stagnant, silent life, for which, when I think of Mrs. Sidgwick, I ought to be very thankful. Be sure you write to me soon, and beg of Anne to inclose a small billet in the same letter; it will be a real charity to do me this kindness. Tell me everything you can think of.

It is a curious metaphysical fact that always in the evening when I am in the great dormitory alone, having no other company than a number of beds with white curtains, I always recur as fanatically as ever to the old ideas, the old faces, and the old scenes in the world below.

Give my love to Anne.—And believe me, yourn

DEAR ANNE,—Write to me.—Your affectionate Schwester,

C. B.

Letter 124

TO EMILY J. BRONTË

BRUSSELS, *May 29th*, 1843.

DEAR E. J.,—The reason of the unconscionable demand for money is explained in my letter to papa. Would you believe it, Mdlle. Mühl demands as much for one pupil as for two, namely, 10 francs per month. This, with the 5 francs per month to the Blanchisseuse, makes havoc in £16 per annum. You will perceive I have begun again to take German lessons. Things wag on much as usual here. Only Mdlle. Blanche and Mdlle. Haussé are at present on a system of war without quarter. They hate each other like two cats. Mdlle. Blanche frightens Mdlle. Haussé by her white passions (for they quarrel venomously). Mdlle. Haussé complains that when Mdlle. Blanche is in fury, '*elle n'a pas de lèvres*.' I find also that Mdlle. Sophie dislikes Mdlle. Blanche extremely. She says she is heartless, insincere, and vindictive, which epithets, I assure you, are richly deserved. Also I find she is the regular spy of Mme. Héger, to whom she reports everything. Also she invents—which I should not have thought. I have now the entire charge of the English lessons. I have given two lessons to the first class. Hortense Jannoy was a picture on these occasions; her face was black as a 'blue-piled thunder-loft,' and her

two ears were red as raw beef. To all questions asked her reply was, '*je ne sais pas.*' It is a pity but her friends could meet with a person qualified to cast out a devil. I am richly off for companionship in these parts. Of late days, M. and Mde. Héger rarely speak to me, and I really don't pretend to care a fig for any body else in the establishment. You are not to suppose by that expression that I am under the influence of *warm* affection for Mde. Héger. I am convinced she does not like me—why, I can't tell, nor do I think she herself has any definite reason for the aversion ; but for one thing, she cannot comprehend why I do not make intimate friends of Mesdames Blanche, Sophie, and Haussé. M. Héger is wonderously influenced by Madame, and I should not wonder if he disapproves very much of my unamiable want of sociability. He has already given me a brief lecture on universal *bienveillance*, and, perceiving that I don't improve in consequence, I fancy he has taken to considering me as a person to be let alone—left to the error of her ways ; and consequently he has in a great measure withdrawn the light of his countenance, and I get on from day to day in a Robinson-Crusoe-like condition—very lonely. That does not signify. In other respects I have nothing substantial to complain of, nor is even this a cause for complaint. Except the loss of M. Héger's goodwill (if I have lost it) I care for none of 'em. I hope you are well and hearty. Walk out often on the moors. Sorry am I to hear that Hannah is gone, and that she has left you burdened with the charge of the little girl, her sister. I hope Tabby will continue to stay with you—give my love to her. Regards to the fighting gentry, and to old asthma.—Your

C. B.

I have written to Branwell, though I never got a letter from him.

Letter 125

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

BRUSSELS, *August 6th*, 1843.

DEAR ELLEN,—You never answered my last letter ; but, however, forgiveness is a part of the Christian Creed, and so having an opportunity to send a letter to England, I forgive you and write to you again. If I complain in this letter, have mercy and don't blame me, for, I forewarn you, I am in low spirits, and that earth and heaven are dreary and empty to me at this moment. In a

few days our vacation will begin; everybody is joyous and animated at the prospect, because everybody is to go home. I know that I am to stay here during the five weeks that the holidays last, and that I shall be much alone during that time, and consequently get downcast, and find both days and nights of a weary length. It is the first time in my life that I have really dreaded the vacation. Last Sunday afternoon, being at the Chapel Royal, in Brussels, I was surprised to hear a voice proceed from the pulpit which instantly brought all Birstall and Batley before my mind's eye. I could see nothing, but certainly thought that that unclerical little Welsh pony, Jenkins, was there. I buoyed up my mind with the expectation of receiving a letter from you, but as, however, I have got none, I suppose I must have been mistaken.

Since I wrote the preceding pages, Mr. Jenkins has called. He brought no letter from you, but said you were at Harrogate, and that they could not find the letter you had *intended* to send. He informed me of two melancholy events. Poor Sarah, when I last bid her good-bye I little thought I should never see her more. Certainly, however, she is happy where she is gone—far happier than she was here. When the first days of mourning are past, you will see that you have reason rather to rejoice at her removal than to grieve for it. Your mother will have felt her death much—and you also. I fear from the circumstance of your being at Harrogate that you are yourself ill. Write to me soon.

Alas! I can hardly write, I have such a dreary weight at my heart; and I do so wish to go home. Is not this childish? Pardon me, for I cannot help it. However, though I am not strong enough to bear up cheerfully, I can still bear up; and I will continue to stay (D.V.) some months longer, till I have acquired German; and then I hope to see all your faces again. Would that the vacation were well over! it will pass so slowly. Do have the Christian charity to write me a long, long letter; fill it with the minutest details; nothing will be uninteresting. Do not think it is because people are unkind to me that I wish to leave Belgium; nothing of the sort. Everybody is abundantly civil, but home-sickness keeps creeping over me. I cannot shake it off. You may scold me or say what you like about this being a scanty, shabby letter; if you had answered my last I might perhaps have had courage to write more. As it is I am incapable. Remember me to your mother and Mercy, and believe me, very merrily, vivaciously, gaily yours, C. B.

Letter 126

TO EMILY J. BRONTË

BRUXELLES, *September 2nd*, 1843.

DEAR E. J.,—Another opportunity of writing to you coming to pass, I shall improve it by scribbling a few lines. More than half the holidays are now past, and rather better than I expected. The weather has been exceedingly fine during the last fortnight, and yet not so Asiatically hot as it was last year at this time. Consequently I have tramped about a great deal and tried to get a clearer acquaintance with the streets of Bruxelles. This week, as no teacher is here except Mdlle. Blanche, who is returned from Paris, I am always alone except at meal-times, for Mdlle. Blanche's character is so false and so contemptible I can't force myself to associate with her. She perceives my utter dislike and never now speaks to me—a great relief.

However, I should inevitably fall into the gulf of low spirits if I stayed always by myself here without a human being to speak to, so I go out and traverse the Boulevards and streets of Bruxelles sometimes for hours together. Yesterday I went on a pilgrimage to the cemetery, and far beyond it on to a hill where there was nothing but fields as far as the horizon. When I came back it was evening; but I had such a repugnance to return to the house, which contained nothing that I cared for, I still kept threading the streets in the neighbourhood of the Rue d'Isabelle and avoiding it. I found myself opposite to Ste. Gudule, and the bell, whose voice you know, began to toll for evening *salut.* I went in, quite alone (which procedure you will say is not much like me), wandered about the aisles where a few old women were saying their prayers, till vespers begun. I stayed till they were over. Still I could not leave the church or force myself to go home—to school I mean. An odd whim came into my head. In a solitary part of the Cathedral six or seven people still remained kneeling by the confessionals. In two confessionals I saw a priest. I felt as if I did not care what I did, provided it was not absolutely wrong, and that it served to vary my life and yield a moment's interest. I took a fancy to change myself into a Catholic and go and make a real confession to see what it was like. Knowing me as you do, you will think this odd, but when people are by themselves they have singular fancies. A penitent was occupied in confessing. They do not go into the sort of pew or cloister which the priest occupies, but kneel down on the steps and confess

through a grating. Both the confessor and the penitent whisper very low, you can hardly hear their voices. After I had watched two or three penitents go and return, I approached at last and knelt down in a niche which was just vacated. I had to kneel there ten minutes waiting, for on the other side was another penitent invisible to me. At last that went away and a little wooden door inside the grating opened, and I saw the priest leaning his ear towards me. I was obliged to begin, and yet I did not know a word of the formula with which they always commence their confessions. It was a funny position. I felt precisely as I did when alone on the Thames at midnight. I commenced with saying I was a foreigner and had been brought up a Protestant. The priest asked if I was a Protestant then. I somehow could not tell a lie, and said 'yes.' He replied that in that case I could not '*jouir du bonheur de la confesse*'; but I was determined to confess, and at last he said he would allow me because it might be the first step towards returning to the true church. I actually did confess—a real confession. When I had done he told me his address, and said that every morning I was to go to the rue du Parc—to his house—and he would reason with me and try to convince me of the error and enormity of being a Protestant!!! I promised faithfully to go. Of course, however, the adventure stops there, and I hope I shall never see the priest again. I think you had better not tell papa of this. He will not understand that it was only a freak, and will perhaps think I am going to turn Catholic. Trusting that you and papa are well, and also Tabby and the Holyes,[1] and hoping you will write to me immediately,—I am, yours,
C. B.

Letter 127

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

BRUSSELS, *October* 13*th*, 1843.

DEAR ELLEN,—I was glad to receive your last letter; but when I read it, its contents gave me some pain. It was melancholy indeed that so soon after the death of a sister you should be called from a distant county by the news of the severe illness of a brother, and, after your return home, your sister Ann should fall ill too. Mary Dixon informs me your brother is scarcely expected to recover—is this true? I hope not, for his sake and yours. His loss would indeed be a blow—a blow which I hope

[1] A playful reference to the curates.

Providence may avert. Do not, my dear Ellen, fail to write to me soon of affairs at Brookroyd. I cannot fail to be anxious on the subject, your family being amongst the oldest and kindest friends I have. I trust this season of affliction will soon pass. It has been a long one.

Mary Taylor is getting on well, as she deserves to do. I often hear from her. Her letters and yours are one of my few pleasures. She urges me very much to leave Brussels and go to her; but at present, however tempted to take such a step, I should not feel justified in doing so. To leave a certainty for a complete uncertainty, would be to the last degree imprudent. Notwithstanding that, Brussels is indeed desolate to me now. Since Mary Dixon left, I have had no friend. I had, indeed, some very kind acquaintances in the family of Dr. Wheelwright, but they too are gone now. They left in the latter part of August, and I am completely alone. I cannot count the Belgians as anything. Madame Héger is a politic, plausible, and interested person. I no longer trust to her. It is a curious position to be so utterly solitary in the midst of numbers. Sometimes the solitude oppresses me to an excess. One day, lately, I felt as if I could bear it no longer, and I went to Madame Héger and gave her notice. If it had depended on her I should certainly have soon been at liberty; but M. Héger, having heard of what was in agitation, sent for me the day after, and pronounced with vehemence his decision that I should not leave. I could not, at that time, have persevered in my intention without exciting him to passion; so I promised to stay a little while longer. How long that will be I do not know. I should not like to return to England to do nothing. I am too old for that now; but if I could hear of a favourable opportunity for commencing a school, I think I should embrace it. I have much to say—many little odd things, queer and puzzling enough—which I do not like to trust to a letter, but which one day perhaps, or rather one evening—if ever we should find ourselves by the fireside at Haworth or at Brookroyd, with our feet on the fender, curling our hair—I may communicate to you. We have as yet no fires here, and I suffer much from cold; otherwise I am well in health. Mr. George Dixon will take this letter to England. He is a pretty-looking and pretty-behaved young man, apparently constructed without a backbone; by which I don't allude to his corporal spine, which is all right enough, but to his character.

Farewell, dear Ellen. Give my love to your mother and sisters,

and good wishes to Mr. George; anything you like to yourself, dear Nell. C. B.

Letter 128

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

BRUSSELS, *Nov.* 1843.

DEAR ELLEN,—What a little sturdy body you are, and your sturdiness is a good thing, if you are quite sure you are in the right. . . . I get on here after a fashion; but now that Mary Dixon has left Brussels, I have nobody to speak to, for I count the Belgians as nothing. Sometimes I ask myself, How long shall I stay here? but as yet I have only asked the question; I have not answered it. However, when I have acquired as much German as I think fit, I think I shall pack up bag and baggage, and depart. Twinges of home-sickness cut me to the heart, every now and then. I do not give to the—(I am forced to take a pencil—my pen is unmanageable)—I say, I do not give to the step Mary Taylor has taken the unqualified approbation you do. It is a step proving an energetic and active mind,—proving the possession of courage, independence, talent, but it is not a *prudent* step. Often genius, like Mary's, triumphs over every obstacle without the aid of prudence,—and I hope she may be successful—hitherto she is so, —but opinion and custom run so strongly against what she does, that I see there is danger of her having much uneasiness to suffer. If her pupils had been girls, it would be all well; the fact of their being *boys*, or rather young men, is the stumbling-block. This opinion is for YOU only, mind.

The portrait you sent of Henry is *like*, but not a likeness worth preserving. His notion of being a Missionary is amusing; he would not live a year in the climates of those countries where Missionaries are wanted.

None of your family have much stamina in the constitution; on the contrary, all are delicate, and he one of the most so.

To-day the weather is gloomy, and I am stupefied with a bad cold and headache. I have nothing to tell you, my dear Ellen. One day is like another in this place. I know you, living in the country, can hardly believe it possible life can be monotonous in the centre of a brilliant capital like Brussels; but so it is. I feel it most on holidays, when all the girls and teachers go out to visit, and it sometimes happens that I am left, during several hours, quite

alone, with four great desolate schoolrooms at my disposition. I try to read, I try to write; but in vain. I then wander about from room to room, but the silence and loneliness of all the house weighs down one's spirits like lead. You will hardly believe that Madame Héger (good and kind as I have described her) never comes near me on these occasions. I own, I was astonished the first time I was left alone thus; when everybody else was enjoying the pleasures of a fête-day with their friends, and she knew I was quite by myself, and never took the least notice of me. Yet, I understand, she praises me very much to everybody, and says what excellent lessons I give. She is not colder to me than she is to the other teachers; but they are less dependent on her than I am. They have relations and acquaintances in Brussels. You remember the letter she wrote me, when I was in England? How kind and affectionate that was? Is it not odd? I fancy I begin to perceive the reason of this mighty distance and reserve; it sometimes makes me laugh, and at other times nearly cry. When I am sure of it, I will tell it you. In the meantime, the complaints I make at present are for your ear only—a sort of relief which I permit myself. In all other respects I am well satisfied with my position, and you may say so to people who inquire after me (if any one does). Write to me, dear Nell, whenever you can. You do a good deed when you send me a letter, for you comfort a very desolate heart. Good-bye.—Love to your mother and sisters.

C. B.

Letter 129

TO EMILY J. BRONTË

BRUSSELS, *December* 19*th*, 1843.

DEAR E. J.,—I have taken my determination. I hope to be at home the day after New Year's Day. I have told Mme. Héger. But in order to come home I shall be obliged to draw on my cash for another £5. I have only £3 at present, and as there are several little things I should like to buy before I leave Brussels—which you know cannot be got as well in England—£3 would not suffice. Low spirits have afflicted me much lately, but I hope all will be well when I get home—above all, if I find papa and you and B. and A. well. I am not ill in body. It is only the mind which is a trifle shaken—for want of comfort.

I shall try to cheer up now.—Good-bye. C. B.

CHAPTER XIII

A QUIET YEAR AT HAWORTH

UPON Charlotte Brontë's return to England in January 1844, she immediately took up once again the project of a school. Leaving Haworth was now out of the question. Her father wanted her care. So it was determined that the school should be in the Haworth parsonage, and a circular was widely circulated among her friends.[1]

[1] The circular ran as follows:—

THE MISSES BRONTË'S ESTABLISHMENT

FOR

THE BOARD AND EDUCATION

OF A LIMITED NUMBER OF

YOUNG LADIES,

THE PARSONAGE, HAWORTH,

NEAR BRADFORD.

TERMS.

	£	s.	d.
Board and Education, including Writing, Arithmetic, History, Grammar, Geography, and Needle Work, per Annum	35	0	0
French, German, Latin } each per Quarter	1	1	0
Music, Drawing } each per Quarter	1	1	0
Use of Piano Forte, per Quarter	0	5	0
Washing, per Quarter	0	15	0

Each Young Lady to be provided with One Pair of Sheets, Pillow Cases, Four Towels, a Dessert and Tea Spoon.

A Quarter's Notice, or a Quarter's Board, is required previous to the Removal of a Pupil.

Letter 130

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *January* ——, 1844.

DEAR ELLEN,—I cannot tell what occupies your thoughts and time. Are you ill? Is some one of your family ill? Are you married? Are you dead? If it be so, you may as well write a word and let me know—for my part, I am again in old England—I shall tell you nothing further till you write to me.

C. BRONTË.

Write to me directly, that is a good girl; I feel really anxious, and have felt so for a long time, to hear from you.

Letter 131

TO ELLEN NUSSEY, EARNLEY RECTORY, CHICHESTER

HAWORTH, *January 23rd*, 1844.

MY DEAR ELLEN,—It was a great disappointment to me to hear that you were in the south of England. I had counted upon seeing *you soon*, as one of the great pleasures of my return; now, I fear, our meeting will be postponed for an indefinite time.

Every one asks me what I am going to do, now that I am returned home; and every one seems to expect that I should immediately commence a school. In truth, it is what I should wish to do. I desire it above all things. I have sufficient money for the undertaking, and I hope now sufficient qualifications to give me a fair chance of success; yet I cannot yet permit myself to enter upon life—to touch the object which seems now within my reach, and which I have been so long straining to attain. You will ask me why. It is on Papa's account; he is now, as you know, getting old, and it grieves me to tell you that he is losing his sight. I have felt for some months that I ought not to be away from him; and I feel now that it would be too selfish to leave him (at least as long as Branwell and Anne are absent) in order to pursue selfish interests of my own. With the help of God I will try to deny myself in this matter, and to wait.

I suffered much before I left Brussels. I think, however long I

live, I shall not forget what the parting with M. Héger cost me; it grieved me so much to grieve him, who has been so true, kind, and disinterested a friend. At parting he gave me a kind of diploma certifying my abilities as a teacher, sealed with the seal of the Athénée Royal, of which he is professor. I was surprised also at the degree of regret expressed by my Belgian pupils, when they knew I was going to leave. I did not think it had been in their phlegmatic nature. When do you think I shall see you? I have, of course, much to tell you, and I dare say you have much also to tell me, of things which we should neither of us wish to commit to paper. I am much disquieted at not having heard from Mary Taylor for so long a time. Joe called at Rue d'Isabelle with a letter from you, but I was already gone. I do not know whether you feel as I do, but there are times now when it appears to me as if all my ideas and feelings, except a few friendships and affections, are changed from what they used to be; something in me, which used to be enthusiasm, is tamed down and broken. I have fewer illusions; what I wish for now is active exertion—a stake in life. Haworth seems such a lonely, quiet spot, buried away from the world. I no longer regard myself as young—indeed, I shall soon be twenty-eight; and it seems as if I ought to be working and braving the rough realities of the world, as other people do. It is, however, my duty to restrain this feeling at present, and I will endeavour to do so. Write to me soon, my dear Ellen, and believe as far as regards yourself, your *unchanged* friend, C. BRONTË.

Remember me with kindness to your brother Henry. Anne and Branwell have just left us to return to York. They are both wondrously valued in their situations.

Letter 132

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

March 25*th*, 1844.

DEAR NELL,—I got home safely, and was not too much tired on arriving at Haworth. I feel rather better to-day than I have been, and in time I hope to regain more strength. I found Emily and Papa well, and a letter from Branwell intimating that he and Anne are pretty well too. Emily is much obliged to you for the flower seeds. She wishes to know if the Sicilian pea and crimson

corn-flower are hardy flowers, or if they are delicate, and should be sown in warm and sheltered situations? Write to me, and let me know how you are, and if George is better. Tell me also if you went to Mrs. John Swain's on Friday, and if you enjoyed yourself; talk to me, in short, as you would do if we were together. Good morning, dear Nell; I shall say no more to you at present. C. BRONTË.

P.S.—Our poor little cat has been ill two days, and is just dead. It is piteous to see even an animal lying lifeless. Emily is sorry.

Letter 133

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

April 5th, 1844.

DEAR NELL,—We were all very glad to get your letter this morning. *We*, I say, as both Papa and Emily were anxious to hear of the safe arrival of yourself and the little *varmint*.[1]

As you conjecture, Emily and I set to shirt-making the very day after you left, and we have stuck to it pretty closely ever since. We miss your society at least as much as you miss ours, depend upon it. Would that you were within calling distance, that you could as you say burst in upon us in an afternoon, and, being despoiled of your bonnet and shawl, be fixed in the rocking-chair for the evening once or twice every week. I certainly cherished a dream during your stay that such might one day be the case, but the dream is somewhat dissipating. I allude of course to Mr. Smith, to whom you do not allude in your letter, and I think you foolish for the omission. I say the dream is dissipating, because Mr. Smith has not mentioned your name since you left, except once when papa said you were a nice girl, he said, 'Yes, she is a nice girl—rather quiet. I suppose she has money,' and that is all. I think the words speak volumes; they do not prejudice one in favour of Mr. Smith. I can well believe what papa has often affirmed, and continues to affirm, *i.e.*, that Mr. Smith is a very fickle man, that if he marries he will soon get tired of his wife, and consider her as a burden, also that money will be a principal consideration with him in marrying.

[1] A little dog, called 'Flossy, junr.,' which indicates its parentage. Flossy was the little dog given by the Robinsons to Anne.

Papa has two or three times expressed a fear that since Mr. Smith paid you so much attention he will perhaps have made an impression on your mind which will interfere with your comfort. I tell him I think not, as I believe you to be mistress of yourself in those matters. Still, he keeps saying that I am to write to you and dissuade you from thinking of him. I never saw papa make himself so uneasy about a thing of the kind before; he is usually very sarcastic on such subjects.

Mr. Smith be hanged! I never thought very well of him, and I am much disposed to think very ill of him at this blessed minute. I have discussed the subject fully, for where is the use of being mysterious and constrained?—it is not worth while.

Be sure you write to me and immediately, and tell me whether you have given up eating and drinking altogether. I am not surprised at people thinking you looked pale and thin. I shall expect another letter on Thursday—don't disappoint me.

My best regards to your mother and sisters.—Yours, somewhat irritated, C. B.

Letter 134

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

April 7th, 1844.

DEAR NELL,—I have received your note. It communicated a piece of good news which I certainly did not expect to hear. I want, however, further enlightenment on the subject. Can you tell me what has caused the change in Mary's plans, and brought her so suddenly back to England? Is it on account of Mary Dixon? Is it the wish of her brother, or is it her own determination? I hope, whatever the reason be, it is nothing which can give her uneasiness or do her harm. Do you know how long she is likely to stay in England? or when she arrives at Hunsworth?

You ask how I am. I really have felt much better the last week—I think my visit to Brookroyd did me good. What delightful weather we have had lately. I wish we had had such while I was with you. Emily and I walk out a good deal on the moors, to the great damage of our shoes, but I hope to the benefit of our health.

Good-bye, dear Ellen. Send me another of your little notes soon. Kindest regards to all, C. B.

Letter 135, much mutilated

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

BRUSSELS [1844].

DEAR ELLEN,—I am just now in a terribly talking humour, and if you were here I should entertain you for hours with interesting trifles; interesting to me, and if they were not to you, why, you would have to bear it! But as I can't enter into a long circumstantial explanation of the state of things here, and there is nothing important going forward, I have just nothing to say. I am alone and melancholy. We sometimes take it into our heads—at least I do—to wonder what we live for, to look all round and see nothing in this world worth getting up for in the morning. I am particularly apt to be of this opinion when something has occurred to show me that those things which I value, those virtues I strive after, that moral beauty which makes the charm of everyday life—all that is worth living for, in fact, is despised . . . by other people. This sometimes gives me the idea that . . . taken, and always makes me feel alone in the world. . . . very have I lately made. Persons whom I considered . . . their conduct that they had no more . . . sider virtue and morality than if they had . . . particulars cannot be written or are not . . . you them when I see you, and if I never tell . . . self the repetition of a vexatious history. . . . you when my outlandish friends . . . what Charlotte is doing? I think of her too. . . . —since I left England. What is the . . . nervous? I have heard of your being . . . you for a full account of her state of health and occupations. I can easily imagine that she is grown low-spirited with solitude and want of interesting employment. Pray write—write sooner than I have done to you and tell me how she goes on. I half expect Joe this Autumn, but if M. Dixon and Wilfram come as they talk of doing, perhaps he will think that is enough. In any case write to me, particularly about Miss Brontë. I have neglected writing to Miss Corkhill. Tell her I will do it shortly. The reason is, we have had neither earthquake nor revolution here, so I have nothing to say. My own affairs go on as usual. I teach and practise music.—You must have heard this till you are tired of it.—Yours truly,

M. TAYLOR.

Letter 136

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

CHAD ROAD, *April* 1844.

DEAR ELLEN,—Many thanks for your welcome to England. How did you smell out so speedily that I was come? I shall see you and ask you this and a thousand other questions in about a fortnight, and then I hope to see C. B. too. I am going to stretch the house at Hunsworth and make it hold three or four people to sleep, whereas I understand that now it only holds two (strangers). Wish M. Carr much happiness for me; she will be married before I see her again. I have nothing to write, and live in hopes of seeing you, so I will not crack my brain to find anything.

Remember me to your Mamma and sisters.—Yours,

M. TAYLOR.

Letter 137

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

May 1844.

I did not 'swear at the postman' when I saw another letter from you, Nell. And I hope you will not 'swear' at me when I tell you that I cannot think of leaving home at present, even to have the pleasure of joining you at Harrogate, but I am obliged to you for thinking of me. Thank you, I have seriously entered into the enterprise of keeping a school—or rather, taking a limited number of pupils at home. That is, I have begun to seek in good earnest for pupils. I wrote to Mrs. White, not asking her for her daughter, I cannot do that, but informing her of my intentions. I received an answer from Mr. White expressive of, I believe, sincere regret that I had not informed them a month sooner, in which case, he said, they would gladly have sent me their own daughter, and also Colonel Stott's, but that now both were promised to Miss Corkhill. I was partly disappointed by this answer, and partly gratified; indeed, I derived quite an impulse of encouragement from the warm assurance that, if I had but applied a little sooner, they would certainly have sent me their daughter. I own, I had misgivings that nobody would be willing to send a child for education to Haworth. These misgivings are partly done away with. I have written

also to Mrs. Busfeild, of Keighley, and have enclosed the diploma which M. Héger gave me before I left Brussels. I have not yet received her answer, but I wait for it with some anxiety. I do not expect that she will send me any of her children, but if she would, I dare say she could recommend me other pupils. Unfortunately, she knows us only very slightly. As soon as I can get an assurance of only *one* pupil, I will have cards of terms printed, and will commence the repairs necessary in the house. I wish all that to be done before winter. I think of fixing the board and English education at £25 per annum. I have nothing new about Rev. Lothario Lovelace Smith; I think I like him a little bit less every day. Mr. Weightman was worth 200 Mr. Smiths tied in a bunch. Good-bye. I fear by what you say, 'Flossy jun.' behaves discreditably, and gets his mistress into scrapes. C. BRONTË.

Letter 138

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

June 9th, 1844.

MY DEAR ELLEN,—Anne and Branwell are now at home, and they and Emily add their request to mine, that you will join us at the beginning of next week. Write and let us know what day you will come, and how—if by coach, we will meet you at Keighley. Do not let your visit be later than the beginning of next week, or you will see little of Anne and Branwell, as their holidays are very short. They will soon have to join the family at Scarborough. Remember me kindly to your mother and sisters. I hope they are all well. C. B.

Letter 139

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

July 29th, 1844.

DEAR NELL,—I am very glad to hear of Henry's good fortune. It proves to me what an excellent thing perseverance is for getting on in the world. Calm self-confidence (not impudence, for that is vulgar and repulsive) is an admirable quality; but how are those not naturally gifted with it to attain it? I am driving on with my small matter as well as I can. I have written to all the friends on whom I have the slightest claim, and to some on

whom I have no claim—Mrs. Busfeild, for example. On her, also, I have actually made bold to call. She was exceedingly polite; regretted that her children were already at school at Liverpool; thought the undertaking a most praiseworthy one, but feared I should have some difficulty in making it succeed on account of the *situation*. Such is the answer I receive from almost every one. I tell them the *retired situation* is, in some points of view, an advantage; that were it in the midst of a large town I could not pretend to take pupils on terms so moderate—Mrs. Busfeild remarked that she thought the terms very moderate—but that, as it is, not having house-rent to pay, we can offer the same privileges of education that are to be had in expensive seminaries, at little more than half their price; and, as our number must be limited, we can devote a large share of time and pains to each pupil. Thank you for the very pretty little purse you have sent me. I make you a curious return in the shape of half a dozen cards of terms. Make such use of them as your judgment shall dictate. You will see that I have fixed the sum at £35, which I think is the just medium, considering advantages and disadvantages. What does your wisdom think about it? We all here get on much as usual. Papa wishes he could hear of a curate, that Mr. Smith may be at liberty to go. Good-bye, dear Ellen. I wish to you and yours happiness, health, and prosperity.

Write again before you go to Burlington. My best love to Mary. C. BRONTË.

Letter 140

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

August 15*th*, 1844.

DEAR NELL,—I send you two additional circulars, and will send you two more, if you desire it, when I write again. I have no news to give you. Mr. Smith leaves in the course of a fortnight. He will spend a few weeks in Ireland previously to settling at Keighley. He continues just the same: often anxious and bad-tempered, sometimes rather tolerable—just supportable. How did your party go off? How are you? Write soon, and at length, for your letters are a great comfort to me. We are all pretty well. Remember me kindly to each member of the household at Brookroyd.—Yours, C. B.

Letter 141

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

Sept. 16th, 1844.

DEAR ELLEN,—I received your kind note last Saturday, and should have answered it immediately, but in the meantime I had a letter from Mary Taylor, and had to reply to her, and to write sundry letters to Brussels to send by opportunity. My sight will not allow me to write several letters per day, so I was obliged to do it gradually.

I send you two more circulars because you ask for them, not because I hope their distribution will produce any result. I hope that if a time should come when Emily, Anne, or I shall be able to serve you, we shall not forget that you have done your best to serve us.

Mr. Smith has gone hence. He is in Ireland at present, and will stay there six weeks. He has left neither a bad nor a good character behind him. Nobody regrets him, because nobody could attach themselves to one who could attach himself to nobody. I thought once he had a regard for you, but I do not think so now. He has never asked after you since you left, nor even mentioned you in my hearing, except to say once when I purposely alluded to you, that you were 'not very locomotive.' The meaning of the observation I leave you to divine.

Yet the man is not without points that will be most useful to himself in getting through life. His good qualities, however, are all of the selfish order, but they will make him respected where better and more generous natures would be despised, or at least neglected.

Mr. Grant fills his shoes at present decently enough—but one cares naught about these sort of individuals, so drop them.

Mary Taylor is going to leave our hemisphere. To me it is something as if a great planet fell out of the sky. Yet, unless she marries in New Zealand, she will not stay there long.

Write to me again soon, and I promise to write you a regular long letter next time. C. BRONTË.

These references to Mr. Smith and Mr. Grant bring us face to face with two of the curates made famous in *Shirley*. Of these gentlemen I shall have more to say

later. The point of immediate interest is the advent in this year of Mr. Arthur Bell Nicholls as Mr. Brontë's curate upon Mr. Smith's promotion to a curacy at the Parish Church of Keighley. Miss Brontë's first impression of Mr. Nicholls was not, it will be seen, very favourable.

Letter 142

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

Oct. 2, '44.

DEAR ELLEN,—I, Emily, and Anne are truly obliged to you for the efforts you have made on our behalf, and if you have not been successful, you are only like ourselves. Every one wishes us well, but there are no pupils to be had. We have no present intention, however, of breaking our hearts on the subject, still less of feeling mortified at defeat. The effort must be beneficial whatever the result may be, because it teaches us experience and an additional knowledge of the world.

Miss Ringrose's letters are distressing indeed. It appears to me most desirable that either you should go to her or she should come to you. It would seem as if there was no one to look after her—no one to take care of her at home. If her mother is so absorbed in her wretched cravings and indulgences as to be incapable of perceiving her daughter's state—has the father no eyes and no understanding? The poor girl is more to be pitied than many a beggar's child, and it is hard indeed that one who deserves all affection and care should be so solitary, so neglected, as she apparently is.

Probably by this time you will know more of her condition, and such a plan would, I am morally certain, be most efficient for her welfare—and it is a pity there is not some one to suggest it to him.

We are getting on here the same as usual—only that Branwell has been more than ordinarily troublesome and annoying of late; he leads Papa a wretched life. Mr. Nicholls is returned just the same; I cannot for my life see those interesting germs of goodness in him you discovered; his narrowness of mind always strikes me chiefly. I fear he is indebted to your imagination for his hidden treasure.

I am sorry to hear that Mercy occasionally spits blood, but I

should think it is more likely to proceed from the lungs than from the stomach. She ought, however, to be . . . [the rest lost].
—Yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

Letter 143

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

November 14th, 1844.

DEAR ELLEN,—Your letter came very apropos, as, indeed, your letters always do; but this morning I had something of a headache, and was consequently rather out of spirits, and the epistle (scarcely legible though it be—excuse a rub) cheered me. In order to evince my gratitude, as well as to please my own inclination, I sit down to answer it immediately. I am glad, in the first place, to hear that Henry is going to be married, and still more so to learn that his wife-elect has a handsome fortune—not that I advocate marrying for money in general, but I think in many cases (and this is one) money is a very desirable contingent of matrimony.

We have made no alterations yet in our house. It would be folly to do so while there is so little likelihood of our ever getting pupils. I fear you are giving yourself too much trouble on our account. Depend upon it, if you were to persuade a mamma to bring her child to Haworth, the aspect of the place would frighten her, and she would probably take the dear girl back with her instanter. We are glad that we have made the attempt, and we will not be cast down because it has not succeeded.

I wonder when Mary Taylor is expected in England. It surprises me to hear of Joe being in Switzerland. Probably she is with him. I trust you will be at home while she is at Hunsworth, and that you, she, and I may meet again somewhere under the canopy of heaven. I cannot, dear Ellen, make any promise about myself and Anne going to Brookroyd at Christmas; her vacations are so short she would grudge spending any part of them from home.

The catastrophe, which you related so calmly, about your book-muslin dress, lace bertha, etc., convulsed me with cold shudderings of horror. You have reason to curse the day when so fatal a present was offered you as that infamous little 'varmint.' The perfect serenity with which you endured the disaster proves most fully to me that you would make the best wife, mother, and

mistress in the world. You and Ann are a pair for marvellous philosophical powers of endurance; no spoilt dinners, scorched linen, dirtied carpets, torn sofa-covers, squealing brats, cross husbands, would ever discompose either of you. You ought never to marry a good-tempered man; it would be mingling honey with sugar, like sticking white roses upon a black-thorn cudgel. With this very picturesque metaphor I close my letter. Good-bye, and write very soon. C. BRONTË.

Letter 144

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

Monday Morning, 1844.

MY DEAR ELLEN,—I received your note this morning. I shall have great pleasure in accepting the kind invitation which it conveys from your mother. I know nothing which can prevent me from coming on the day you fix, viz. Thursday next. If, therefore, Mr. George will be kind enough to meet me at Bradford, I shall (D.V.) be at the Talbot Inn at half-past four P.M., the time the mail-coach arrives from Keighley. How glad shall I be to see you once more in good health, but I shall try to meet you gravely and quietly. No enthusiasm, mind; all that shall be put by for our evenings, when we curl our hair. Good-bye, dear Nell; there's a warm corner remains in my heart for you at any rate. Remember me kindly to your mother, sisters, and brothers.

C. BRONTË.

Letter 145

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

January ——, 1845.

MY DEAR ELLEN,—We were at breakfast when your note reached me, and I consequently write in great hurry. Your trials seem to thicken. I trust God will either remove them, or give you strength to bear them. If I could but come to you and offer you all the little assistance either my head or my hands could afford, but that is impossible. I scarcely dare offer to comfort you about W., lest my consolation should seem like mockery. I know that in cases of sickness, strangers cannot measure what relations feel. One thing, however, I need not remind *you* of. You will have repeated it over and over to your-

self before now. 'God does all for the best,' and even should the worst happen, and death seem finally to destroy hope, remember, Ellen, that this will be but a practical test of the strong faith and calm devotion which have marked you a Christian so long. I would hope, however, the time for this test is not yet come, that your brother may recover and all be well. It grieves me to hear that your own health is so indifferent; once more I wish I were with you, to lighten at least by sympathy the burden that seems so unsparingly laid upon you. Let me thank you, Ellen, for remembering me in the midst of such hurry and affliction. We are all apt to grow selfish in distress. This, so far as I have found, is not your case. *When* shall I see you again? The uncertainty in which the answer to that question must be involved gives me a bitter feeling. Through all changes, and through all chances, I trust I shall love you as I do now. We can pray for each other, and think of each other. Distance is no bar to recollection. You have promised to write to me soon, and I do not doubt that you will keep your word. Give my love to M. and your mother. Take with you my blessing and affection, all the warmest wishes of a warm heart for your welfare. Miss W. sends her love. C. BRONTË.

Letter 146

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

January 13th, 1845.

MY DEAR ELLEN,—I have often said and thought that you have had many and heavy trials to bear in your still short life. You have always borne them with great firmness and calm so far —I hope fervently you will still be enabled to do so. Yet there is something in your letter that makes me fear the present is the greatest trial of all, and the most severely felt by you. I hope it will soon pass over and leave no shadow behind it. A certain space of time, complete rest, such care as you will give to George, *must*, with God's blessing, produce the best results. I do earnestly desire to be with you, to talk to you, to give you what comfort I can. I cannot go with you to Harrogate, but in a letter I had from Mary Taylor this morning, she tells me George will probably soon be going with Henry to ——, and you will be returning to Brookroyd. Branwell and Anne leave us on Saturday. Branwell has been quieter and less irritable on the whole

this time than he was in summer. Anne is as usual—always good, mild, and patient. I think she too is a little stronger than she was. Shortly after Branwell and Anne leave I shall go to Hunsworth for a week, if all be well. If you are likely to come home shortly, I will put off my visit till that time. Write to me as soon as you can, and tell me how George and yourself are.—Good-bye, dear Ellen, C. BRONTË.

Letter 147

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

Undated, 1845.

DEAR ELLEN,—I have lately wondered very much why you did not write to me. I now know the cause. Mary Taylor is staying with us at present, and she has told me the distressing circumstances which absorb both your time and thought at present.

Poor Mr. George! I am very sorry for him, very sorry; he did not deserve this suffering. I know, too, what a calamity his severe illness will be to all the family, and most especially for you.

This morning (Monday) Mary has had a letter from one of her brothers, which informs us that Mr. George is rather better.

Do not write to me, Ellen, till you have time and composure to write without too much trouble. What can be the cause of these severe attacks to which Mr. George has been subjected? Does his medical attendant treat him properly?

When you do write, inform me how you all bear the fatigue of body and anxiety of mind you have had to go through.

Mary Taylor is looking very well, and is in good spirits. Good-bye, dear Ellen. C. BRONTË.

Letter 148

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

Feb. 20th, 1845.

DEAR ELLEN,—You ought to have written to me before now—you promised I should hear from you soon—and the non-fulfilment of this promise makes me rather afraid that some disagreeable event or other is the occasion of the delay. I hope George continues to improve in health; write soon and let me know whether such is the case or not. I spent a week at Hunsworth not very pleasantly; headache, sickliness, and flatness of spirits made me a poor companion, a sad drag on the vivacious and

loquacious gaiety of all the other inmates of the house. I never was fortunate enough to be able to rally, for so much as a single hour, while I was there. I am sure all, with the exception perhaps of Mary, were very glad when I took my departure. I begin to perceive that I have too little life in me, nowadays, to be fit company for any except very quiet people. Is it age, or what else, that changes one so? I had a note from Mary yesterday. She said she was to leave Hunsworth on Friday. She asked for your address. I did not know the address of the lodgings, so I gave her that of Mr. ——, where I shall also send this note. If you have any French newspapers send them soon. I had one sent, I think, direct from Hunsworth to-day; but there is one missed between, and I should like to read that one first. Write to me, if possible, immediately. C. BRONTË.

Letter 149

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

Mar. 4th, '45.

MY DEAR ELLEN,—I must just acknowledge your last note, though I have not, this morning, time to write a long letter.

From what you say of George's state of health, it seems to me that decidedly the best plan would be (if possible) to isolate him for a time from *all his relations*—yourself included, and let him travel with a judicious and conscientious medical man; such a mode of cure would be expensive, but certainly it would be the surest and speediest.

It is an unvarying symptom in cases of diseased brain, for the patient to feel irritation in the presence of his relations, and to be averse to receive their services, and I believe they often feel most antipathy to those whom, in health, they were most attached to.

If you stay with George you will probably suffer much in mind, be worn down in body, and do no real good. Take the advice of the medical man you have consulted at Burlington, and let your other relations take it—otherwise they will probably repent hereafter. I believe it is of great importance not to lose time in such cases. All of course depends upon what resources there are for meeting expense, and of that you can judge.

Remember me very kindly to Mrs. Hudson, to whom I shall again direct this letter—not knowing your address at the Quay. Tell her that our stay at Easton is one of the pleasant recollections of my life—one of the green spots that I look back on with real

pleasure. I often think it was singularly good of her to receive me, a perfect stranger, so kindly as she did.

I know of no new books—unless it be *The Chimes*, by Dickens, which I have not read. I have had no news from Hunsworth since I last wrote to you. I should like to hear whether Mary is actually gone. Write to me again soon, dear Ellen, as I am truly anxious to hear of you and of George, both for your sake and his own.—Yours,

C. BRONTË.

Letter 150

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

March 21st, 1845.

DEAR ELLEN,—I received the enclosed letters from Mary this morning, with directions from Joe Taylor to send them on to you as soon as I had read them, and request you to despatch instanter back to Hunsworth.

He likewise says I ought by all means to have sent you the French newspapers, and no doubt thinks me exquisitely stupid because I did not.

Mary is in her element now. She has done right to go out to New Zealand.

C. BRONTË.

Letter 151

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

March 24th, 1845.

DEAR ELLEN,—I repeat what you say sometimes to me—'Take care of yourself'; you are not strong enough to travel seventy miles in an open gig in very cold weather. Don't do it again. . . . You have done quite right to leave George for a time: your absence cannot harm him, and a total estrangement from the presence and things that were about him in his illness will do him good. Do not, dear Ellen, be disheartened because his improvement in health is slow. When one thinks of the nature of his illness, of the extreme delicacy of the organ affected, the brain, it is obvious that that organ after the cessation of fever and inflammation cannot all at once regain its healthy state. Have you heard any particulars of Mary Taylor's departure, what day she sailed, etc.?

I can hardly tell you how time gets on at Haworth. There is no event whatever to mark its progress. One day resembles another; and all have heavy, lifeless physiognomies. Sunday

baking day, and Saturday are the only ones that have any distinctive mark. Meantime life wears away. I shall soon be thirty, and I have done nothing yet. Sometimes I get melancholy at the prospect before and behind me. Yet it is wrong and foolish to repine. Undoubtedly my duty directs me to stay at home for the present. There was a time when Haworth was a very pleasant place to me; it is not so now. I feel as if we were all buried here. I long to travel, to work, to live a life of action. Excuse me, dear, for troubling you with my fruitless wishes. I will put by the rest and not trouble you with them. You *must* write to me. If you knew how welcome your letters are you would write very often. Your letters, and the French newspapers, are the only messengers that come to me from the outer world beyond our moors, and very welcome messengers they are. Do you know anything about Miss Wooler? Write very soon, dear Ellen. Good-bye. I shall be sorry when you are gone to Hathersage, you will be so far off again. How long will Mary want you to stay?

C. BRONTË.

Letter 152

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

April 2nd, 1845.

DEAR ELLEN,—I send you herewith a French newspaper which, however, will be of little interest, as you have missed so many in consequence of your absence. You should ask Joe Taylor to give you those you have missed. I should think he still has them in his possession. I am greatly obliged to your mother for her kindness in asking me to come to see you now, but I would much rather put off my visit till after all stirs are over, till your bridesmaid duties are all discharged; and when you are quite alone, quite settled and quiet, somewhere about the beginning of autumn, I will, if all be well, make shift to toddle over and see you. I see plainly, it is proved to us, that there is scarcely a draught of unmingled happiness to be had in this world. George's illness comes with Mary's marriage. Mary Taylor finds herself free, and on that path to adventure and exertion to which she has so long been seeking admission. Sickness, hardship, danger are her fellow-travellers—her inseparable companions. She may have been out of the reach of these S.W.N.W. gales before they began to blow, or they may have spent their fury on land and not ruffled the sea much. If it has been otherwise she has been sorely tossed,

while we have been sleeping in our beds, or lying awake thinking about her. Yet these real, material dangers, when once past, leave in the mind the satisfaction of having struggled with difficulty and overcome it. Strength, courage, and experience are their invariable results; whereas I doubt whether suffering purely mental has any good result, unless it be to make us by comparison less sensitive to physical suffering. I repeat, then, Mary Taylor has done well to go to New Zealand, but I wish we could soon have another letter from her. I hope she may write soon from Madeira. Ten years ago I should have laughed at your account of the blunder you made in mistaking the bachelor doctor of Burlington for a married man. I should have certainly thought you scrupulous overmuch, and wondered how you could possibly regret being civil to a decent individual merely because he happened to be single instead of double. Now, however, I can perceive that your scruples are founded on common-sense. I know that if women wish to escape the stigma of husband-seeking they must act and look like marble or clay—cold, expressionless, bloodless; for every appearance of feeling, of joy, sorrow, friendliness, antipathy, admiration, disgust are alike construed by the world into the attempt to hook a husband. Never mind! well-meaning women have their own consciences to comfort them after all. Do not, therefore, be too much afraid of showing yourself as you are, affectionate and good-hearted; do not too harshly repress sentiments and feelings excellent in themselves, because you fear that some puppy may fancy that you are letting them come out to fascinate him; do not condemn yourself to live only by halves, because if you showed too much animation some pragmatical thing in breeches might take it into his pate to imagine that you designed to dedicate your life to his inanity. Still, a composed, decent, equable deportment is a capital treasure to a woman, and that you possess. Write again soon, for I feel rather fierce and want stroking down. Good-bye, dear Nell.

C. B.

Letter 153

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

April 24th, 1845.

Dear Ellen,—You are a very good girl indeed to send me such a long and interesting letter. In all that account of the young lady and gentleman in the railway carriage, I recognise

your faculty for observation, which is a rarer gift than you imagine. You ought to be thankful for it. I never yet met with an individual devoid of observation whose conversation was interesting; nor with one possessed of that power, in whose society I could not manage to pass a pleasant hour. I was amused with your allusions to Hunsworth. I have little doubt of the truth of the report you mention. *Money* would decide that point as it does most others of a similar nature. You are perfectly right in saying that Mr. Joe is more influenced by opinion than he himself suspects. I saw his lordship in a new light last time I was at Hunsworth. I could scarcely believe my ears when I heard the stress he laid on wealth, appearance, family, and all those advantages which are the acknowledged idols of the world. I raised no argument against anything he said; I listened and laughed inwardly to think how *indignant* I should have been eight years since if any one had accused Joe Taylor of being a worshipper of Mammon and of interest. The world with its hardness and selfishness has utterly changed him. He thinks himself grown wiser than the wisest; in a worldly sense he is wise, his feelings have gone through a process of petrifaction which will prevent them from ever warring against his interest, but Ichabod! all glory of principle and much elevation of character is gone!

I have just received a note from Ellen Taylor requesting me to write to you, as they do not know your address, and beg you to send the French papers when you have done with them to Mr. T. Dixon, care of Mr. J., Civil Engineer, Sheffield. Be sure and write to me soon. No further news yet from Mary. Many happy returns of your birthday. In my answer to Ellen Taylor I gave her your address. C. BRONTË.

Letter 154

TO FRANCIS H. GRUNDY

October 1845.

I fear you will burn my present letter on recognising the handwriting; but if you will read it through, you will perhaps rather pity than spurn the distress of mind which could prompt my communication, after a silence of nearly three (to me) eventful years. While very ill and confined to my room, I wrote to you two months ago, hearing that you were resident engineer of the Skipton Railway, to the inn at Skipton. I never received any

reply, and as to my letter asked only for one day of your society to ease a very weary mind in the company of a friend who always had what I always wanted, but most want now, cheerfulness. I am sure you never received my letter, or your heart would have prompted an answer.

Since I last shook hands with you in Halifax, two summers ago, my life till lately has been one of apparent happiness and indulgence. You will ask, 'Why does he complain then?' I can only reply by showing the under-current of distress which bore my bark to a whirlpool, despite the surface waves of life that seemed floating me to peace. In a letter begun in the spring of 1844 and never finished, owing to incessant attacks of illness, I tried to tell you that I was tutor to the son of ——, a wealthy gentleman whose wife is sister to the wife of ——, M.P., for the county of ——, and the cousin of Lord ——. This lady (though her husband detested me) showed me a degree of kindness which, when I was deeply grieved one day at her husband's conduct, ripened into declarations of more than ordinary feeling. My admiration of her mental and personal attractions, my knowledge of her unselfish sincerity, her sweet temper, and unwearied care for others, with but unrequited return where most should have been given . . . although she is seventeen years my senior, all combined to an attachment on my part, and led to reciprocations which I had little looked for. During nearly three years I had daily 'troubled pleasure soon chastised by fear.' Three months since I received a furious letter from my employer, threatening to shoot me if I returned from my vacation, which I was passing at home; and letters from her lady's-maid and physician informed me of the outbreak, only checked by her firm courage and resolution that whatever harm came to her, none should come to me . . . I have lain during nine long weeks utterly shattered in body and broken down in mind. The probability of her becoming free to give me herself and estate never rose to drive away the prospect of her decline under her present grief. I dreaded, too, the wreck of my mind and body, which, God knows, during a short life have been severely tried. Eleven continuous nights of sleepless horror reduced me to almost blindness, and being taken into Wales to recover, the sweet scenery, the sea, the sound of music caused me fits of unspeakable distress. You will say, 'What a fool!' but if you knew the many causes I have for sorrow which I cannot even hint at here, you would perhaps pity as well as blame. At the kind request of Mr. Macaulay and Mr. Baines, I have striven to

arouse my mind by writing something worthy of being read, but I really cannot do so. Of course, you will despise the writer of all this. I can only answer that the writer does the same, and would not wish to live if he did not hope that work and change may yet restore him.

Apologising sincerely for what seems like whining egotism, and hardly daring to hint about days when in your company I could sometimes sink the thoughts which 'remind me of departed days,' I fear departed never to return, I remain, etc.

P. B. BRONTË.

Letter 155

TO FRANCIS H. GRUNDY

HAWORTH, NR. BRADFORD,
2nd May 1846.

DEAR SIR,—I cannot avoid the temptation to cheer my spirits by scribbling a few lines to you while I sit here alone—all the household being at church—the sole occupant of an ancient parsonage among lonely hills, which probably will never hear the whistle of an engine till I am in my grave.[1]

After experiencing, since my return home, extreme pain and illness, with mental depression worse than either, I have at length acquired health and strength and soundness of mind, far superior, I trust, to anything shown by that miserable wreck you used to know under my name. I can now speak cheerfully and enjoy the company of another without the stimulus of six glasses of whisky; I can write, think, and act with some apparent approach to resolution, and I only want a motive for exertion to be happier than I have been for years. But I feel my recovery from almost insanity to be retarded by having nothing to listen to except the wind moaning among old chimneys and older ash trees, nothing to look at except heathery hills walked over when life had all to hope for and nothing to regret with me—no one to speak to except crabbed old Greeks and Romans who have been dust the last five thousand years. And yet this quiet life, from its contrast, makes the year passed at Luddenden Foot appear like a nightmare, for I would rather give my hand than undergo again the grovelling carelessness, the malignant yet cold debauchery, the determination to find how far mind could carry body without both being chucked into hell, which too often marked my conduct when

[1] The line from Keighley to Haworth was opened 13th April 1867.

there, lost as I was to all I really liked, and seeking relief in the indulgence of feelings which form the black spot on my character.

Yet I have something still left in me which may do me service. But I ought not to remain too long in solitude, for the world soon forgets those who have bidden it 'Good-bye.' Quiet is an excellent cure, but no medicine should be continued after a patient's recovery, so I am about, though ashamed of the business, to dun you for answers to . . . (Here follow inquiries as to obtaining some appointment).

Excuse the trouble I am giving to one on whose kindness I have no claim, and for whose services I am offering no return except gratitude and thankfulness, which are already due to you. Give my sincere regards to Mr. Stephenson. A word or two to show that you have not altogether forgotten me will greatly please yours, etc. P. B. BRONTË.

Letter 156

TO FRANCIS H. GRUNDY

HAWORTH, BRADFORD, YORK.
July 1846.

DEAR SIR,—I must again trouble you with——(Here comes another prayer for employment, with, at the same time, a confession that his health alone renders the wish all but hopeless). Subsequently he says: 'The gentleman with whom I have been is dead. His property is left in trust for the family, provided I do not see the widow; and if I do, it reverts to the executing trustees, with ruin to her. She is now distracted with sorrows and agonies; and the statement of her case, as given by her coachman who has come to see me at Haworth, fills me with inexpressible grief. Her mind is distracted to the verge of insanity, and mine is so wearied that I wish I were in my grave. —Yours very sincerely, P. B. BRONTË.

Since I saw Mr. George Gooch, I have suffered much from the accounts of the declining health of her whom I must love most in this world, and who, for my fault, suffers sorrows which surely were never her due. My father, too, is now quite blind, and from such causes literary pursuits have become matters I have no heart to wield. If I could see you it would be a sincere pleasure, but . . . Perhaps your memory of me may be dimmed, for you have known little in me worth remembering; but I still think often

with pleasure of yourself, though so different from me in head and mind.

If I have strength enough for the journey, and the weather be tolerable, I shall feel happy in visiting you at the Devonshire[1] on Friday, the 31st of this month. The sight of a face I have been accustomed to see and like when I was happier and stronger, now proves my best medicine.

Letter 157

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

Sunday Evening, June 1st, 1845.

DEAR ELLEN,—You probably know that another letter has been received from Mary Taylor. It is, however, possible that your absence from home will have prevented your seeing it, so I will give you a sketch of its contents. It was written at about 4° N. of the Equator. The first part of the letter contained an account of their landing at Santiago. Her health at that time was very good, and her spirits seemed excellent. They had had contrary winds at first setting out, but their voyage was then prosperous. In the latter portion of the letter she complains of the excessive heat, and says she lives chiefly on oranges; but still she was well, and freer from headache and other ailments than any other person on board. The receipt of this letter will have relieved all her friends from a weight of anxiety. I am uneasy about what you say respecting the French newspapers—do you mean to intimate that you have received none since you went to Harrogate? I have despatched them regularly. Emily and I keep them usually three days, sometimes only two, and then send them forward to you. I see by the cards you sent and also by the newspaper that Henry is at last married. How did you like your office of bridesmaid? and how do you like your new sister and her family? You must write to me as soon as you can, and give me an *observant* account of everything. It seems strange that after all Henry should be married, and well married, before George. Who would have thought that such would have been the case ten years ago? I saw in the papers some weeks since a notice of the death of Mr. Ringrose, merchant of Hull. Is that the father of Amelia Ringrose? If so, in what way will the event affect George's interests, favourably or otherwise? I still believe these

[1] A well-known hotel in Keighley.

matters will terminate happily for him. I still fancy there is comfort in store for him somewhere. Should it turn out otherwise, my ideas on the subject of Compensation and Providential Care will be singularly baffled. Still I know that the course of events cannot be calculated by human sagacity, nor the justice of destinies decided on by human opinion; therefore it is absurd either to predict or to prejudge, so I hold my tongue.

Write to me soon, dear Ellen, and don't forget to tell me about the newspapers. I sent one yesterday, and I shall send one with the letter to-morrow. How is your health, and how is Mary? Remember me kindly to her. C. B.

Letter 158

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

June 13, '45.

DEAR ELLEN,—Your letter was, as usual, very interesting to me. You really must have a great deal to do, but if the responsibility does not harass your mind and fatigue your body too much, it is, on the whole, rather a good thing for you. It is practice—in case you should soon marry yourself, and have a house of your own to look after—and if you should not, it is still exercise of the faculties, which is always beneficial. These brides, by the bye, are well off, to have everything done to their hand so nicely. What I should like the least, if I were in your place, would be the choosing of servants and the ordering of furniture—the parish business I should object far less to.

I am very glad you like your new sister so well, and I hope the longer you know her the more meritorious she will appear. As to Mrs. P——, who, you say, is like me, I somehow feel no leaning to her at all—I never do to people who are said to be like me—because I have always a notion that they are only like me in the disagreeable outside, first-acquaintance part of my character, in those points which are obvious to the ordinary run of people, and which I know are not pleasing. You say she is clever, a 'clever person,'—how I dislike the term! It means a rather shrewd, very ugly, meddling, talking woman.

How long are you going to stay at Hathersage? As to my going to see you there, it is quite out of the question. It is hardly worth while to take so long a journey for a week or a fortnight, and longer I could not stay. I feel reluctant indeed to

leave Papa for a single day; his sight diminishes weekly, and can it be wondered at that, as he sees the most precious of his faculties leaving him, his spirits sometimes sink? It is so hard to feel that his few and scanty pleasures must all soon go; he now has the greatest difficulty in either reading or writing, and then, he dreads the state of dependence to which blindness will inevitably reduce him. He fears that he will be nothing in his parish. I try to cheer him; sometimes I succeed temporarily, but no consolation can restore his sight or atone for the want of it. Still, he is never peevish, never impatient, only anxious and dejected.

I read Miss Ringrose's note attentively. There is great propriety and discretion in it; it seems to me somewhat calm, perhaps *too calm* for the circumstances; yet she may be an excellent and affectionate girl, notwithstanding that, to me, incomprehensible tranquillity. I should say she would precisely have suited George as a wife, if she be ladylike, affectionate, and sensible—her decorum and touch of phlegm would have been in decided recommendation to most men, as a wife. Those are the people that are made for marriage—such, at least, is my belief. I think if I were in your place, I would answer that one letter, but by no means carry on a reckless correspondence; it is evidently not a case in which a third person ought to interfere.

When you return to Brookroyd, I hope I shall be able to pay you a short visit, for I certainly long to see you. Write to me again as soon as you can. I was on the point of saying, remember me to Mary Gorham, as if she had been an acquaintance of mine; somehow from your description I always imagine her to resemble Mary Taylor, and feel a respect for her accordingly.

You do not tell me how Mercy is—is she still at Hathersage? If she be, give my love to her. Good-bye, C. BRONTË.

Letter 159

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

June 18, '45.

DEAR NELL,—You thought I refused you coldly, did you? It was a queer sort of coldness, when I would have given my ears to say Yes, and was obliged to say No. Matters, however, are

now a little changed. Branwell and Anne are both come home, and Anne, I am rejoiced to say, has decided not to return to Mr. Robinson's; her presence at home certainly makes me feel more at liberty. Then, dear Ellen, if all be well, I will come and see you at Hathersage. Tell me only, when I must come. Mention the week and the day. Have the kindness, also, to answer the following queries, if you can. How far is it from Leeds to Sheffield? Can you give me a notion of the cost? Of course, when I come, you will let me enjoy your own company in peace, and not drag me out a-visiting. I have no desire to see your medical-clerical curate. I think he must be like most other curates I have seen; and they *seem* to me a self-seeking, vain, empty race. At this blessed moment we have no less than three of them in Haworth parish, and God knows, there is not one to mend another. The other day, they all three, accompanied by Mr. Smidt[1] (of whom, by the way, I have grievous things to tell you), dropped, or rather rushed, in unexpectedly to tea. It was Monday [baking-day], and I was hot and tired; still, if they had behaved quietly and decently, I would have served them out their tea in peace; but they began glorifying themselves and abusing Dissenters in such a manner, that my temper lost its balance, and I pronounced a few sentences sharply and rapidly, which struck them all dumb. Papa was greatly horrified also. I don't regret it. Give my respects (as Joe Taylor says) to Miss Gorham. By the bye, I reserve the greatest part of Master Joe's epistle till we meet. I can only say that it is highly characteristic. Write soon. Come to Sheffield to meet me, if you can. C. BRONTË.

Letter 160

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

June 22nd, 1845.

DEAR NELL,—When did you write your letter? I only got it to-day, therefore, of course, I cannot come till Tuesday. Mind you do not put yourself to any inconvenience to come to Sheffield to meet me. I am sorry I shall not be in time to go with you to Chatsworth and the Peak; but observe, I will certainly make you go again. I feel shy at the thought of seeing Miss Gorham, though I am a middle-aged person, and she is a young lady. Good-bye, dear Nell, C. BRONTË.

[1] A playful reference to the new curate of Keighley.

Letter 161

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

June 24th, 1845.

DEAR ELLEN,—It is very vexatious for you to have had to go to Sheffield in vain. I am glad to hear that there is an omnibus on Thursday, and I have told Emily and Anne I will try to come on that day. The opening of the railroad is now postponed till July 7th. I should not like to put you off again, and for that and some other reasons they have decided to give up the idea of going to Scarbro', and instead, to make a little excursion next Monday and Tuesday to Ilkley or elsewhere. I hope no other obstacle will arise to prevent my going to Hathersage. I do long to be with you, and I feel nervously afraid of being prevented, or put-off in some way. Branwell only stayed a week with us, but he is to come home again when the family go to Scarboro'. I will write to Brookroyd directly. Yesterday I had a little note from Henry inviting me to go to see you. This is one of your contrivances, for which you deserve smothering. You have written to Henry to tell him to write to me. Do you think I stood on ceremony about the matter?

The French papers have ceased to come. Good-bye for the present. C. B.

Letter 162

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

July 23rd, '45.

DEAR ELLEN,—I was glad to get your little packet; it was quite a treasure of interest to me. I think the intelligence about George is cheering. I read the lines to Miss Ringrose; they are expressive of the affectionate feelings of his nature, and are *poetical* in so much as they are *true*—faults in expression, rhythm, metre, were of course to be expected.

I got home very well. There was a gentleman in the railroad carriage whom I recognised by his features immediately as a foreigner and Frenchman. So sure was I of it, that I ventured to say to him in French—'Monsieur est français, n'est-ce pas?' He gave a start of surprise, and answered immediately in his own

tongue; he appeared still more astonished, and even puzzled, when after a few minutes' further conversation, I inquired if he had not passed the greater part of his life in Germany. He said the surmise was correct. I had guessed it from his speaking French with the German accent.

It was ten o'clock at night when I got home. I found Branwell ill; he is so very often owing to his own fault. I was not therefore shocked at first, but when Anne informed me of the immediate cause of his present illness, I was greatly shocked. He had last Thursday received a note from Mr. Robinson sternly dismissing him, intimating that he had discovered his proceedings, which he characterised as bad beyond expression, and charging him on pain of exposure to break off instantly and for ever all communication with every member of his family. We have had sad work with Branwell since. He thought of nothing but stunning or drowning his distress of mind. No one in the house could have rest. At last we have been obliged to send him from home for a week, with some one to look after him; he has written to me this morning, and expresses some sense of contrition for his frantic folly; he promises amendment on his return, but so long as he remains at home I scarce dare hope for peace in the house. We must all, I fear, prepare for a season of distress and disquietude. When I left you I was strongly impressed with the feeling that I was going back to sorrow. I cannot now ask Miss Wooler or any one else. Give my love to Miss Ringrose, and ask her to forgive me for disfiguring her album. Write to me soon as you can, after the bride and bridegroom are come home. Good-bye, dear Nell, C. BRONTË.

Letter 163

TO MRS. NUSSEY

July 23rd, 1845.

MY DEAR MRS. NUSSEY,—I lose no time after my return home in writing to you and offering you my sincere thanks for the kindness with which you have repeatedly invited me to go and stay a few days at Brookroyd. It would have given me great pleasure to have gone, had it been only for a day, just to have seen you and Miss Mercy (Miss Nussey, I suppose, is not at home) and to have been introduced to Mrs. Henry, but I have stayed so long with Ellen at Hathersage that I could not possibly now go to Brook-

royd. I was expected at home; and after all, *home* should always have the first claim on our attention. When I reached home (at ten o'clock on Saturday night) I found papa, I am thankful to say, pretty well, but he thought I had been a long time away.

I left Ellen well, and she had generally good health while I stayed with her, but she is very anxious about matters of business, and apprehensive lest things should not be comfortable against the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Henry—she is so desirous that the day of their arrival at Hathersage should be a happy one to both.

I hope, my dear Mrs. Nussey, you are well; and I should be very happy to receive a little note either from you or from Miss Mercy to assure me of this.—Believe me, yours affectionately and sincerely, C. BRONTË.

At this point we are admitted once more to a glimpse of the interior of the Haworth parsonage even more interesting than Charlotte's letters. I have already given two fragments of the diary of Emily and Anne under date 1841. In the little box that contained these fragments were two further scraps of paper. They were written on July the 31st, 1845. I give Emily's memorandum first of all:—

Haworth, Thursday, July 30th, 1845.

My birthday—showery, breezy, cool. I am twenty-seven years old to-day. This morning Anne and I opened the papers we wrote four years since, on my twenty-third birthday. This paper we intend, if all be well, to open on my thirtieth—three years hence, in 1848. *Since the* 1841 *paper the following events have taken place. Our school scheme has been abandoned, and instead Charlotte and I went to Brussels on the 8th of February* 1842.

Branwell left his place at Luddenden Foot. C. and I returned from Brussels, November 8th, 1842, *in consequence of aunt's death.*

Branwell went to Thorp Green as a tutor, where Anne still continued, January 1843.

Charlotte returned to Brussels the same month, and after staying a year, came back again on New Year's Day 1844.

Anne left her situation at Thorp Green of her own accord, June 1845.

Anne and I went our first long journey by ourselves together,

leaving home on the 30th of June, Monday, sleeping at York, returning to Keighley Tuesday evening, sleeping there and walking home on Wednesday morning. Though the weather was broken we enjoyed ourselves very much, except during a few hours at Bradford. And during our excursion we were, Ronald Macalgin, Henry Angora, Juliet Angusteena, Rosabella Esmaldan, Ella and Julian Egremont, Catharine Navarre, and Cordelia Fitzaphnold, escaping from the palaces of instruction to join the Royalists who are hard driven at present by the victorious Republicans. The Gondals still flourish bright as ever. I am at present writing a work on the First War. Anne has been writing some articles on this, and a book by Henry Sophona. We intend sticking firm by the rascals as long as they delight us, which I am glad to say they do at present. I should have mentioned that last summer the school scheme was revived in full vigour. We had prospectuses printed, despatched letters to all acquaintances imparting our plans, and did our little all; but it was found no go. Now I don't desire a school at all, and none of us have any great longing for it. We have cash enough for our present wants, with a prospect of accumulation. We are all in decent health, only that papa has a complaint in his eyes, and with the exception of B., who, I hope, will be better and do better hereafter. I am quite contented for myself: not as idle as formerly, altogether as hearty, and having learnt to make the most of the present and long for the future with the fidgetiness that I cannot do all I wish; seldom or ever troubled with nothing to do, and merely desiring that everybody could be as comfortable as myself and as undesponding, and then we should have a very tolerable world of it.

By mistake I find we have opened the paper on the 31st instead of the 30th. Yesterday was much such a day as this, but the morning was divine.

Tabby, who was gone in our last paper, is come back, and has lived with us two years and a half, and is in good health. Martha, who also departed, is here too. We have got Flossy; got and lost Tiger; lost the hawk Hero, which, with the geese, was given away, and is doubtless dead, for when I came back from Brussels I inquired on all hands and could hear nothing of him. Tiger died early last year. Keeper and Flossy are well, also the canary acquired four years since. We are now all at home, and likely to be there some time. Branwell went to Liverpool on Tuesday to stay a week. Tabby has just been teasing me to turn as formerly to 'Pilloputate.'

Anne and I should have picked the black currants if it had been fine and sunshiny. I must hurry off now to my turning and ironing. I have plenty of work on hands, and writing, and am altogether full of business. With best wishes for the whole house till 1848, *July* 30*th, and as much longer as may be,—I conclude.* *Emily Brontë.*

Finally, I give Anne's last fragment:—

Thursday, July the 31*st,* 1845. *Yesterday was Emily's birthday, and the time when we should have opened our* 1841 *paper, but by mistake we opened it to-day instead. How many things have happened since it was written—some pleasant, some far otherwise. Yet I was then at Thorp Green, and now I am only just escaped from it. I was wishing to leave it then, and if I had known that I had four years longer to stay how wretched I should have been; but during my stay I have had some very unpleasant and undreamt-of experience of human nature. Others have seen more changes. Charlotte has left Mr. White's, and been twice to Brussels, where she stayed each time nearly a year. Emily has been there too, and stayed nearly a year. Branwell has left Luddenden Foot, and been a tutor at Thorp Green, and had much tribulation and ill health. He was very ill on Thursday, but he went with John Brown to Liverpool, where he now is, I suppose; and we hope he will be better and do better in future. This is a dismal, cloudy, wet evening. We have had so far a very cold, wet summer. Charlotte has lately been to Hathersage, in Derbyshire, on a visit of three weeks to Ellen Nussey. She is now sitting sewing in the dining-room. Emily is ironing upstairs. I am sitting in the dining-room in the rocking-chair before the fire with my feet on the fender. Papa is in the parlour. Tabby and Martha are, I think, in the kitchen. Keeper and Flossy are, I do not know where. Little Dick is hopping in his cage. When the last paper was written we were thinking of setting up a school. The scheme has been dropt, and long after taken up again, and dropt again, because we could not get pupils. Charlotte is thinking about getting another situation. She wishes to go to Paris. Will she go? She has let Flossy in, by-the-by, and he is now lying on the sofa. Emily is engaged in writing the Emperor Julius's Life. She has read some of it, and I want very much to hear the rest. She is writing some poetry, too. I wonder what it is about? I have begun the third volume of* Passages in the Life of an Individual. *I wish I had finished it. This afternoon I began to set about making my*

grey figured silk frock that was dyed at Keighley. What sort of a hand shall I make of it? E. and I have a great deal of work to do. When shall we sensibly diminish it? I want to get a habit of early rising. Shall I succeed? We have not yet finished our Gondal Chronicles *that we began three years and a half ago. When will they be done? The Gondals are at present in a sad state. The Republicans are uppermost, but the Royalists are not quite overcome. The young sovereigns, with their brothers and sisters, are still at the Palace of Instruction. The Unique Society, about half a year ago, were wrecked on a desert island as they were returning from Gaul. They are still there, but we have not played at them much yet. The Gondals in general are not in first-rate playing condition. Will they improve? I wonder how we shall all be, and where and how situated, on the thirtieth of July* 1848, *when, if we are all alive, Emily will be just* 30. *I shall be in my* 29*th year, Charlotte in her* 33*rd, and Branwell in his* 32*nd; and what changes shall we have seen and known; and shall we be much changed ourselves? I hope not, for the worse at least. I for my part, cannot well be flatter or older in mind than I am now. Hoping for the best, I conclude.* *Anne Brontë.*

The two girls still keep young in the four years of acute experience. There is wonderfully little difference in the tone or spirit of the journals. Emily's concluding 'best wishes for this whole house till July the 30th, 1848, and as much longer as may be,' contain no premonition of coming disaster. Yet July 1848 was to find Branwell Brontë on the verge of the grave, and Emily almost in similar plight. She died on the 14th of December of that year.

Letter 164

TO ELLEN NUSSEY, HATHERSAGE

Aug. 18*th*, '45.

DEAR ELLEN,—You will think I have been long in writing to you, and long in sending you the French newspaper. I did not send the paper because I did not get it myself. I have delayed writing because I have no good news to communicate. My hopes ebb low indeed about Branwell. I sometimes fear he will never be fit for much. His bad habits seem more deeply rooted than

I thought. The late blow to his prospects and feelings has quite made him reckless. It is only absolute want of means that acts as any check to him. One ought, indeed, to hope to the very last; and I try to do so, but occasionally hope, in his case, seems a fallacy. I am writing to you, not because I have anything to tell you, but because I want you to write to me. I am glad to see that you were pleased with your new sister. When I was at Hathersage, you were talking of writing to Mary Taylor. I have lately written to her, a brief, shabby epistle of which I am ashamed, but I found when I began to write I had really very little to say. I sent the letter to Hunsworth, and I suppose it will go sometime. You must write to me soon, a long letter. Remember me respectfully to Mr. and Mrs. Henry Nussey. Give my love to Miss R.—Yours, C. B.

Letter 165

TO ELLEN NUSSEY, HATHERSAGE

HAWORTH, *August* —, 1845.

DEAR ELLEN,—I shall just scribble a line or two in answer to your last, as you wished me to write soon.

Things here at home are much as usual—not very bright as regards Branwell, though his health and consequently his temper have been somewhat better this last day or two, because he is now *forced* to abstain.

Poor Miss Ringrose's note interested me greatly; your position with regard to her is a difficult one, and I feel it hazardous to advise you; I can only say that were you or I either of us in her place, we should be most anxious to know the *truth*. Still, if you do tell her all, Ellen, convey your intelligence in careful and guarded language; above all, remove from her mind the idea that she is the *cause* of this disaster, otherwise the news would be too dreadful.

You are, however, far the best judge as to whether disclosures are advisable or not; and I would not, on this point, bias your judgment one grain.

Dr. B.'s letter did not please me much—it seems so cold, so formal, so little explanatory—yet we cannot judge; what to you is a matter where your very best affections are concerned, to him is only business; and if he discharges that business with integrity, I suppose it is all we can expect from him.

You must be sure and not leave Hathersage till Joe Taylor has paid his visit, and tell me how he looks and what he says; if he comes out in the colours in which we have seen him, he will be a strong dose to Mrs. Henry.

I am not, just at present, disposed to augur so well of her as I was. It seems most astonishing to me that she should not be most desirous to receive you.

Write again very soon. C. B.

Letter 166

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

Sep. 8th, '45.

DEAR ELLEN,—You will wonder why I have not sent the French newspaper. I did not finish reading it till yesterday. I am glad you have got home, and yet I scarcely know why I should be. I neither intend to go and see you soon, nor to ask you to come and see us. Branwell makes no effort to seek a situation, and while he is at home I will invite no one to come and share our discomfort. I was much struck with ——. I could not live with one so cold and narrow, though she were correct as a mathematical straight line, and upright as perpendicularity itself. Emily and Anne regret, as I do, that we cannot ask you to come to Haworth; we think during this fine weather how we should enjoy your company.—Write to me soon, dear Nell.

C. BRONTË.

Letter 167

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

Sep. 18th, '45.

DEAR ELLEN,—I have just read Mary's letters; they are very interesting, and show the vigorous and original cast of her mind. There is but one thing I could wish otherwise in them, that is a certain tendency to flightiness—it is not safe, it is not wise, and will often cause her to be misconstrued. Perhaps flightiness is not the right word, but it is a devil-may-care tone; which I do not like when it proceeds from under a hat, and still less from under a bonnet. I long to hear of Mary being arrived at her remote destination and occupied in serious business, then she will be in her element; then her powerful faculties will be put to their right use. Write to me again soon. All continues the same here. Good-bye. C. B.

Letter 168

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

Oct. 7th, 1845.

DEAR ELLEN,—Your position seems to be one full of difficulties and embarrassments, but how often does it happen that in situations precisely similar to yours, when a hedge of danger and trial seems to enclose us on every side, an opening is suddenly made and a way of escape afforded where we thought it least practicable.

I see you have courage and calmness; this is the state of mind which will enable you best to take advantage of the means of safety should they offer. I have complete faith in your moral fortitude, and I trust and believe God will grant you physical health and strength to bear up against whatever trial may await you. You and your sister Ann could work your way well—you have each in a different way resources within yourselves—but your poor mother, Mercy, George, Joseph, what can they do, what can be done for them? If these Swaines are really acting a false and dishonest part, I would not be in their place for the wealth of a Rothschild; no one ever yet unjustly oppressed the defenceless without his sin being visited fearfully upon him.

Depend upon it, dear Ellen, it is better that you should have no visitors at present, not even one so insignificant as me. I have told you without apology, that I cannot ask you to Haworth at present. I told Miss Wooler the same.

It gave me a feeling of painful surprise to learn that you had not yet seen Joe Taylor. Surely with a man so strong-minded and firm-principled as we have always been accustomed to believe Joe Taylor to be, even the circumstance of his being about to become closely connected with the Nusseys of White-Lee ought not fairly to extinguish his regard for old friends. When is he likely to be married to Isabella Nussey, do you think? Possibly it may be the pressure of business which prevents his coming to Brookroyd. I had a note from Ellen Taylor to-day in which it was mentioned that John Taylor was gone from home.

Let me hear from you again, dear Ellen, with as little delay as possible. Such a long interval elapsed between your last letter and the one before, that I began to grow quite uneasy.

I have scribbled this note by candle-light—my eyes are tired—which must plead my excuse for the almost illegible writing.

Give my best love to your mother and sisters. Emily was wondering the other day how poor little Flossy gets on.

Good-night, dear Nell. C. B.

Letter 169

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

November 4th, 1845.

DEAR ELLEN,—You do not reproach me in your last, but I fear you must have thought me unkind in being so long without answering you. The fact is, I had hoped to be able to ask you to come to Haworth. Branwell seemed to have a prospect of getting employment, and I waited to know the result of his efforts in order to say, 'Dear Ellen, come and see us,' but the place (a secretaryship to a railroad committee) is given to another person, Branwell still remains at home, and while he is here—you shall not come. I am more confirmed in that resolution the more I know of him. I wish I could say one word to you in his favour, but I cannot, therefore I will hold my tongue.

Poor Miss Ringrose's letters interest me much—they are quiet and unpretending, but seem affectionate and sincere. Will she and George ever be married? Such an event seems to human eyes very unlikely now; yet that is no proof that it will not one day take place. Oh, I wish brighter days would come for all your family, and they may do so sooner than we calculate. We are all obliged to you, dear Ellen, for your kind suggestion about Leeds, but I think our school schemes are for the present at rest. Emily and Anne wish me to tell you that they think it very unlikely for little Flossy to be expected to rear so numerous a family; they think you are quite right in protesting against all the pups being preserved, for if kept they will pull their poor little mother to pieces. The French newspaper I send you to-day is the first we have had for an age—two have missed. Be sure I shall always be punctual in despatching them to you, so that when there is a long gap you will know to what quarter to ascribe the delay. I believe Joe Taylor is at present at Ilkley, or has been there lately. I saw his name in the newspaper in the list of visitors 'at this fashionable watering-place.'

Do not think about my coming to Brookroyd for the present, Ellen. Give my sincere love to your mother, Ann, and Mercy, and believe me, yours faithfully, C. B.

Letter 170

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

Nov. 20th, '45.

DEAR ELLEN,—I was very glad to get your little note, short as it was. I consider on the whole it contained good news; the last sentence concerning George is quite cheering. I persist in saying good times are still in store for Brookroyd, for I have ever remarked that after much distress comes a proportionate degree of happiness. And so Joseph Taylor, Esq., of Hunsworth Mills, Cleckheaton, has rediscovered the way to Brookroyd. High time he did so. I am not surprised to hear that Mr. and Mrs. T. are about to leave the old lady; her unhappy disposition is preparing for her a most desolate old age.

Good-bye,—write directly. Once more I tell you not to ask me to go to Brookroyd. I have no thought of leaving home at present. C. B.

Letter 171

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

Dec. 14th, 1845.

DEAR ELLEN,—I was glad to get your last note, though it was so short and crusty. Three weeks had elapsed without my having heard a word from you, and I began to fear that some new misfortune had occurred—that George was worse, or something of that kind. I was relieved to find that such was not the case. Anne is obliged to you for the kind regret you express at not being able to ask her to Brookroyd; she wishes you could come to Haworth. I think you are a trifle 'out of your head.' Do you scold me out of habit, Ellen, or are you really angry? In either case it is all nonsense. You know as well as I do that to go to Brookroyd is always a great pleasure to me, and that to one who has so little change and so few friends as I have, it must be a *great* pleasure—but I am not at all times in the mood or circumstances to take my pleasure. I wish so much to see you, that I shall certainly sometime after New Year's Day, if all be well, be going over for a day or two to Birstall. *Now* I *could not* go if I *would*. At the latter end of February or the beginning of March I may be able to do so. If you think I stand upon ceremony in this matter, you miscalculate sadly. I have known

you, your mother and sisters, too long to be ceremonious with any of you.

Invite me no more now, Nell, till I invite myself, be too proud to trouble yourself, and if, when at last I mention coming (for I shall give you warning), it does not happen to suit you, tell me so with quiet hauteur.

I should like a long letter next time, with full particulars, and in the name of Common Sense, no more lover's quarrels.

Good-bye. C. B.

My best love to your mother and sisters.

Letter 172

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

Dec. 31*st*, '45.

DEAR ELLEN,—I don't know whether most to thank you for the very pretty slippers you have sent me, or to scold you for occasioning yourself, in the slightest degree, trouble or expense on my account. I will have them made up and bring them with me, if all be well, when I come to Brookroyd.

Reading your letter left me a somewhat 'sair heart.' These Swaines seem to be so selfish and mean a set, and it seems so hard that people like them should have it in their power to annoy you. I greatly fear they will not scruple to use such power without reserve of delicacy—as far as they can. I only hope that their capability to injure your mother may be limited. Never doubt that I shall come to Birstall as soon as I *can*, Nell. I dare say my wish to see you is equal to your wish to see me. I had a note on Saturday from Ellen Taylor informing me that letters had been received from Mary, and that she was very well and in good spirits. I suppose you have not yet seen them as you do not mention them—but you will probably have them in your possession before you get this note: I am glad you are pretty well satisfied respecting George's position. I should think the calm, tranquil state of his mind is a favourable symptom. Miss Ringrose, I suppose, has ceased to write to you, as you do not mention her now. You say well, in speaking of Branwell, that no sufferings are so awful as those brought on by dissipation: alas! I see the truth of this observation daily proved. Ann and Mercy must have a weary and burdensome life of it, in waiting upon their

unhappy brother. It seems grievous, indeed, that those who have not sinned should suffer so largely. Write to me a little oftener, I am very glad to get your notes. Remember me kindly to your mother and sisters.—Yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

Letter 173

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

Jan. 3rd, '46.

DEAR ELLEN,—I must write to you to-day whether I have anything to say or not, or else you will begin to think that I have forgotten you; whereas, never a day passes, seldom an hour, that I do not think of you, *and the scene of trial* in which you live, move, and have your being. Mary Taylor's letter was deeply interesting and strongly characteristic. I have no news whatever to communicate. No changes take place here. Branwell offers no prospect of hope, he professes to be too ill to think of seeking for employment, he makes comfort scant at home. I hold to my intention of going to Birstall as soon as I can, that is, provided you will have me.

Give my best love to your mother and sisters.—Yours, dear Nell, always faithful, C. BRONTË.

Letter 174

TO MISS WOOLER

January 30th, 1846.

MY DEAR MISS WOOLER,—I have not yet paid my usual visit to Brookroyd, but I frequently hear from Ellen, and she did not fail to tell me that you were gone into Worcestershire. She was unable, however, to give me your address; had I known it I should have written to you long since.

I thought you would wonder how we were getting on when you heard of the Railway Panic, and you may be sure I am very glad to be able to answer your kind inquiries by an assurance that our small capital is as yet undiminished. The 'York and Midland' is, as you say, a very good line, yet I confess to you I should wish, for my part, to be wise in time. I cannot think that even the very best lines will continue for many years at their present premiums, and I have been most

anxious for us to sell our shares ere it be too late, and to secure the proceeds in some safer, if, for the present, less profitable investment. I cannot, however, persuade my sisters to regard the affair precisely from my point of view, and I feel as if I would rather run the risk of loss than hurt Emily's feelings by acting in direct opposition to her opinion. She managed in a most handsome and able manner for me when I was at Brussels, and prevented by distance from looking after my own interests; therefore, I will let her manage still, and take the consequences. Disinterested and energetic she certainly is, and if she be not quite so tractable or open to conviction as I could wish, I must remember perfection is not the lot of humanity. And as long as we can regard those we love, and to whom we are closely allied, with profound and very unshaken esteem, it is a small thing that they should vex us occasionally by, what appear to us, unreasonable and headstrong notions. You, my dear Miss Wooler, know full as well as I do the value of sisters' affections to each other; there is nothing like it in this world, I believe, when they are nearly equal in age, and similar in education, tastes, and sentiments.

You ask about Branwell. He never thinks of seeking employment, and I begin to fear he has rendered himself incapable of filling any respectable station in life; besides, if money were at his disposal he would use it only to his own injury; the faculty of self-government is, I fear, almost destroyed in him. You ask me if I do not think men are strange beings. I do, indeed—I have often thought so; and I think too that the mode of bringing them up is strange, they are not half sufficiently guarded from temptations. Girls are protected as if they were something very frail and silly indeed, while boys are turned loose on the world as if they, of all beings in existence, were the wisest and the least liable to be led astray.

I am glad you like Bromsgrove, though I dare say there are few places you would not like with Mrs. M—— for a companion. I always feel a peculiar satisfaction when I hear of your enjoying yourself, because it proves to me that there is really such a thing as retributive justice even in this life; now you are free, and that while you have still, I hope, many years of vigour and health in which you can enjoy freedom. Besides, I have another and very egotistical motive for being pleased: it seems that even 'a lone woman' can be happy, as well as cherished wives and proud

mothers. I am glad of that—I speculate much on the existence of unmarried and never-to-be married woman now-a-days, and I have already got to the point of considering that there is no more respectable character on this earth than an unmarried woman who makes her own way through life quietly, perseveringly, without support of husband or mother, and who, having attained the age of forty-five or upwards, retains in her possession a well-regulated mind, a disposition to enjoy simple pleasures, fortitude to support inevitable pains, sympathy with the sufferings of others, and willingness to relieve want as far as her means extend. Jane had the pleasure of seeing Mrs. M—— at ——. Will you offer her my respectful remembrances. I wish to send this letter off by to-day's post, I must therefore conclude in haste.—Believe me, my dear Miss Wooler, yours, most affectionately, C. BRONTË.

Write to me again when you have time.

Letter 175

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

Feb. 13th, '46.

DEAR ELLEN,—Will it suit you if I come to Brookroyd next Wednesday, and stay till the Wednesday after ; if convenient tell me so at once and fix your own time. Is there a coach from Bradford to Birstall on Wednesday? If so, do you know what time it leaves Bradford? I should be there at the Talbot about 4.30 P.M.

Letter 176

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *Feb. 25th*, 1846.

DEAR MISS NUSSEY,—I fancy this note will be too late to decide one way or other with respect to Charlotte's stay. Yours only came this morning (Wednesday), and unless mine travels faster you will not receive it till Friday. Papa, of course, misses Charlotte, and will be glad to have her back. Anne and I ditto; but as she goes from home so seldom, you may keep her a day or two longer, if your eloquence is equal to the task of persuading her—that is, if she still be with you when you get this permission. Love from Anne.—Yours truly, EMILY J. BRONTË.

CHAPTER XIV

CURRER, ELLIS, AND ACTON BELL

Our last chapter began and concluded in a merely domestic strain, taking us up to the end of February 1846. But in January of this year had begun a correspondence which was entirely to revolutionise the life of this quiet family in a remote Yorkshire village. Charlotte wrote a letter to a firm of booksellers in Paternoster Row as to the publication by them of a volume of poems. She has herself told the story of this project in an eloquent introduction to an edition of her sisters' novels published in 1850.

One day in the autumn of 1845 I accidentally lighted on a MS. volume of verse in my sister Emily's handwriting. Of course I was not surprised, knowing that she could and did write verse. I looked it over, and something more than surprise seized me—a deep conviction that these were not common effusions, nor at all like the poetry women generally write. I thought them condensed and terse, vigorous and genuine. To my ear they had also a peculiar music, wild, melancholy, and elevating. My sister Emily was not a person of demonstrative character, nor one on the recesses of whose mind and feelings even those nearest and dearest to her could, with impunity, intrude unlicensed: it took hours to reconcile her to the discovery I had made, and days to persuade her that such poems merited publication. . . . Meantime my younger sister quietly produced some of her own compositions, intimating that since Emily's had given me pleasure I might like to look at hers. I could not but be a partial judge, yet I thought that these verses too had a sweet, sincere pathos of their own. We had very early cherished the dream of one day being authors. . . . We agreed to arrange a small selection of our poems, and, if possible, get them printed. Averse to personal publicity, we veiled our own names under those of Currer,

Ellis, and Acton Bell; the ambiguous choice being dictated by a sort of conscientious scruple at assuming Christian names positively masculine, while we did not like to declare ourselves women, because—without at the time suspecting that our mode of writing and thinking was not what is called 'feminine'—we had a vague impression that authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice; we noticed how critics sometimes used for their chastisement the weapon of personality, and for their reward a flattery which is not true praise. The bringing out of our little book was hard work. As was to be expected, neither we nor our poems were at all wanted; but for this we had been prepared at the outset; though inexperienced ourselves, we had read of the experience of others. The great puzzle lay in the difficulty of getting answers of any kind from the publishers to whom we applied. Being greatly harassed by this obstacle, I ventured to apply to Messrs. Chambers of Edinburgh for a word of advice; *they* may have forgotten the circumstance, but *I* have not, for from them I received a brief and business-like, but civil and sensible reply, on which we acted, and at last made way.

Letter 177

TO AYLOTT & JONES

January 28th, 1846.

GENTLEMEN,—May I request to be informed whether you would undertake the publication of a collection of short poems in one volume, 8vo.

If you object to publishing the work at your own risk, would you undertake it on the author's account?—I am, gentlemen, your obedient humble servant, C. BRONTË.

Address—Rev. P. Brontë, Haworth, Bradford, Yorkshire.

Letter 178

TO AYLOTT & JONES

January 31st, 1846.

GENTLEMEN,—Since you agree to undertake the publication of the work respecting which I applied to you, I should wish now to know, as soon as possible, the cost of paper and printing. I will then send the necessary remittance, together with the manuscript. I should like it to be printed in one octavo volume, of the same quality of paper and size of type as Moxon's last

edition of Wordsworth. The poems will occupy, I should think, from 200 to 250 pages. They are not the production of a clergyman, nor are they exclusively of a religious character; but I presume these circumstances will be immaterial. It will, perhaps, be necessary that you should see the manuscript, in order to calculate accurately the expense of publication; in that case I will send it immediately. I should like, however, previously to have some idea of the probable cost; and if, from what I have said, you can make a rough calculation on the subject, I should be greatly obliged to you. C. BRONTË.

Address—Rev. P. Brontë, Haworth, Bradford, Yorkshire.

Letter 179

TO AYLOTT & JONES

Feb. 6th, 1846.

GENTLEMEN,—You will perceive that the poems are the work of three persons, relatives; their separate pieces are distinguished by their respective signatures. C. BRONTË.

Letter 180

TO AYLOTT & JONES

Feb. 16th, 1846.

GENTLEMEN,—The MS. will certainly form a thinner volume than I had anticipated. I cannot name another model which I should like it precisely to resemble, yet I think a duodecimo form and a somewhat reduced, though still *clear* type, would be preferable. I only stipulate for *clear* type, not too small, and good paper. C. BRONTË.

Address—Rev. P. Brontë, Haworth, Bradford, Yorkshire.

Letter 181

TO AYLOTT & JONES

March 3rd, 1846.

GENTLEMEN,—I send a draft for £31, 10s., being the amount of your estimate.

I suppose there is nothing now to prevent your immediately commencing the printing of the work.

When you acknowledge the receipt of the draft, will you state how soon it will be completed?—I am, gentlemen, yours truly,

C. BRONTË.

I have not been able to find out very much about the individuality of the two young men to whom belongs the distinction of issuing the first book by Charlotte Brontë and her sisters. They were booksellers and stationers rather than publishers, but they were responsible for two noteworthy literary undertakings, neither of which implied any financial success. Not only did they publish the poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell, but they issued in common for Dante Gabriel Rossetti and his Pre-Raphaelite colleagues the parts of *The Germ*: *Thoughts towards Nature in Poetry, Literature, and Art.*[1]

Meanwhile two domestic tragedies were going on side by side with this aspiration to success in poetry, as the following letter indicates; one was the father's approaching blindness and the question of an operation by a Manchester oculist, the other was the moral deterioration of Branwell.

Letter 182

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

March 3rd, 1846.

DEAR ELLEN,—I reached home a little after two o'clock, all safe and right, yesterday; I found papa very well; his sight

[1] Mrs. Martyn, a daughter of Mr. Aylott, has written to a correspondent as follows concerning her father's publishing efforts:—

'I thank you very much for your kind reply to my note, and I will endeavour to give you what information I can about my father's business life. It is so many years since he died (1872) and many more years since his connection with Charlotte Brontë—for I was quite a young girl when he used to tell us about her, and how she would make a three days' journey from the Yorkshire Moors to come and see him about her books. I believe it was only her poems that my father published, for he refused her novels, as he was rather old-fashioned and had very narrow views regarding light literature, so that he suggested that she should take them to Messrs. Smith and Elder. My father much preferred publishing classical and theological books, and the enclosed list is the only one I have, showing some of his publications. He commenced business in 1828 in Chancery Lane, and from there he went to 8 Paternoster Row. Mr. Jones was his partner for a few years, but I believe he was rather a hard man, and my father being of a very amiable and genial disposition, they did not pull together very well, and so that partnership was dissolved and the firm was Aylott and Co., as another partner was taken in, though not having his name known. After that my brother was made partner and the firm was then Aylott and Son until my father retired in 1866. Besides publishing he did a very great deal in export with the Church Missionary Society in West Africa, and his house of business was the centre for the Church of England Book Hawking Union. Our home was in Mildmay Park, and for many years we belonged to the late Rev. W. Pennefather's church, where my father was churchwarden and a much-loved friend of the Vicar's.'

much the same. Emily and Anne were gone to Keighley to meet me; unfortunately, I had returned by the old road, while they were gone by the new, and we missed each other. They did not get home till half-past four, and were caught in a heavy shower of rain which fell in the afternoon. I am sorry to say Anne has taken a little cold in consequence, but I hope she will soon be well. Papa was much cheered by my report of Mr. Carr's opinion, and of old Mrs. Carr's experience; but I could perceive he caught gladly at the idea of deferring the operations a few months longer. I went into the room where Branwell was, to speak to him, about an hour after I got home; it was very forced work to address him. I might have spared myself the trouble, as he took no notice, and made no reply; he was stupefied. My fears were not in vain. I hear that he had got a sovereign from papa while I have been away, under pretence of paying a pressing debt; he went immediately and changed it at a public-house, and has employed it as was to be expected. Emily concluded her account by saying he was a hopeless being; it is too true. In his present state, it is scarcely possible to stay in the room where he is. What the future has in store I do not know. I hope Mary and Miss B—— got home without any wet; give my love to your mother and sisters. Let me hear from you if possible on Thursday.—Believe me, dear Nell, yours faithfully, C. B.

Emily calls her brother 'a hopeless being,' and Branwell had already reached that stage of physical and moral wreckage where even his most broadminded sister had had to give him up. We who have read his weak and foolish letters have seen what a moral degenerate he had long since become, but much of his crookedness of nature was never revealed to his sisters—his infinite capacity for lying for example.

Branwell after the many changes of occupation that we have noted had obtained a post as tutor to the son of Mr. Robinson in the very house at Thorp Green in which his sister Anne was a governess. He had commenced his duties in December 1842.

It would not be rash to assume—although it is only an assumption—that Branwell took to opium soon after he

entered upon his duties at Thorp Green. I have already said something of the trouble which befell Mrs. Gaskell in accepting the statements of Charlotte Brontë, and—after Charlotte's death—of her friends, to the effect that Branwell became the prey of a designing woman, who promised to marry him when her husband—a venerable clergyman—should be dead. The story has been told too often. Branwell was dismissed, and returned to the parsonage to rave about his wrongs. If Mr. Robinson should die, the widow had promised to marry him, he assured his friends. Mr. Robinson did die (May 26, 1846), and then Branwell insisted that by his will he had prohibited his wife from marrying, under penalties of forfeiting the estate. A copy of the document is in my possession :

The eleventh day of September 1846 *the Will of the Reverend Edmund Robinson late of Thorp Green, in the Parish of Little Ouseburn, in the County of York, Clerk, deceased, was proved in the Prerogative Court of York by the oaths of Lydia Robinson, Widow, his Relict; the Venerable Charles Thorp and Henry Newton, the Executors, to whom administration was granted.*

Needless to say, the will, a lengthy document, put no restraint whatever upon the actions of Mrs. Robinson. Upon the publication of Mrs. Gaskell's Life she was eager to clear her character in the law-courts, but was dissuaded therefrom by friends, who pointed out that a withdrawal of the obnoxious paragraphs in succeeding editions of the Memoir, and the publication of a letter in the *Times*, would sufficiently meet the case.

Here is the letter from the advertisement pages of the *Times* :—

8 BEDFORD ROW,
LONDON, *May 26th*, 1857.

DEAR SIRS,—As solicitor for and on behalf of the Rev. W. Gaskell and of Mrs. Gaskell, his wife, the latter of whom is authoress of the *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, I am instructed to retract every statement contained in that work which imputes to a widowed lady, referred to, but not named therein, any breach of her conjugal, of her maternal, or of her social duties, and more especially

of the statement contained in chapter 13 of the first volume, and in chapter 2 of the second volume, which imputes to the lady in question a guilty intercourse with the late Branwell Brontë. All those statements were made upon information which at the time Mrs. Gaskell believed to be well founded, but which, upon investigation, with the additional evidence furnished to me by you, I have ascertained not to be trustworthy. I am therefore authorised not only to retract the statements in question, but to express the deep regret of Mrs. Gaskell that she should have been led to make them.—I am, dear sirs, yours truly,

WILLIAM SHAEN.

Messrs. Newton & Robinson, Solicitors, York.

A certain 'Note' in the *Athenæum* a few days later is not without interest now :—

We are sorry to be called upon to return to Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, but we must do so, since the book has gone forth with our recommendation. Praise, it is needless to point out, implied trust in the biographer as an accurate collector of facts. This, we regret to state, Mrs. Gaskell proves not to have been. To the gossip which for weeks past has been seething and circulating in the London *coteries*, we gave small heed ; but the *Times* advertises a legal apology, made on behalf of Mrs. Gaskell, withdrawing the statements put forth in her book respecting the cause of Branwell Brontë's wreck and ruin. These Mrs. Gaskell's lawyer is now fain to confess his client advanced on insufficient testimony. The telling of an episodical and gratuitous tale so dismal as concerns the dead, so damaging to the living, could only be excused by the story of sin being severely, strictly true ; and every one will have cause to regret that due caution was not used to test representations not, it seems, to be justified. It is in the interest of Letters that biographers should be deterred from rushing into print with mere impressions in place of proofs, however eager and sincere those impressions may be. They *may* be slanders, and as such they may sting cruelly. Meanwhile the *Life of Charlotte Brontë* must undergo modification ere it can be further circulated.'

It is pleasant after this to return to the little publishing project, and I give the remainder of the letters treating of the issue of the poems of Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell, the first book issued by the three sisters.

Letter 183

TO AYLOTT & JONES

March 11th, 1846.

GENTLEMEN,—I have received the proof-sheet, and return it corrected. If there is any doubt at all about the printer's competency to correct errors, I would prefer submitting each sheet to the inspection of the authors, because such a mistake, for instance, as *tumbling* stars, instead of *trembling*, would suffice to throw an air of absurdity over a whole poem; but if you know from experience that he is to be relied on, I would trust to your assurance on the subject, and leave the task of correction to him, as I know that a considerable saving both of time and trouble would be thus effected.

The printing and paper appear to me satisfactory. Of course I wish to have the work out as soon as possible, but I am still more anxious that it should be got up in a manner creditable to the publishers and agreeable to the authors.—I am, gentlemen, yours truly, C. BRONTË.

Letter 184

TO AYLOTT & JONES

March 13th, 1846.

GENTLEMEN,—I return you the second proof. The authors have finally decided that they would prefer having all the proofs sent to them in turn, but you need not enclose the MS., as they can correct the errors from memory.—I am, gentlemen, yours truly, C. BRONTË.

Letter 185

TO AYLOTT & JONES

March 23rd, 1846.

GENTLEMEN,—As the proofs have hitherto come safe to hand under the direction of C. Brontë, *Esq.*, I have not thought it necessary to request you to change it, but a little mistake having occurred yesterday, I think it will be better to send them to me in future under my *real* address, which is Miss Brontë, Rev. P. Brontë, etc.—I am, gentlemen, yours truly,

C. BRONTË.

Letter 186

TO AYLOTT & JONES

April 6th, 1846.

GENTLEMEN,—C., E., and A. Bell are now preparing for the press a work of fiction, consisting of three distinct and unconnected tales, which may be published either together, as a work of three volumes, of the ordinary novel size, or separately as single volumes, as shall be deemed most advisable.

It is not their intention to publish these tales on their own account. They direct me to ask you whether you would be disposed to undertake the work, after having, of course, by due inspection of the MS., ascertained that its contents are such as to warrant an expectation of success.

An early answer will oblige, as, in case of your negativing the proposal, inquiry must be made of other publishers.—I am, gentlemen, yours truly, C. BRONTË.

Letter 187

TO AYLOTT & JONES

April 11th, 1846.

GENTLEMEN,—I beg to thank you, in the name of C., E., and A. Bell, for your obliging offer of advice. I will avail myself of it to request information on two or three points. It is evident that unknown authors have great difficulties to contend with before they can succeed in bringing their works before the public. Can you give me any hint as to the way in which these difficulties are best met? For instance, in the present case, where a work of fiction is in question, in what form would a publisher be most likely to accept the MS., whether offered as a work of three vols., or as tales which might be published in numbers, or as contributions to a periodical?

What publishers would be most likely to receive favourably a proposal of this nature?

Would it suffice to *write* to a publisher on the subject, or would it be necessary to have recourse to a personal interview?

Your opinion and advice on these three points, or on any other which your experience may suggest as important, would be esteemed by us as a favour. C. BRONTË.

Letter 188

TO AYLOTT & JONES

April 15th, 1846.

GENTLEMEN,—I have to thank you for your obliging answer to my last. The information you give is of value to us, and when the MS. is completed your suggestions shall be acted on.

There will be no preface to the poems. The blank leaf may be filled up by a table of contents, which I suppose the printer will prepare. It appears the volume will be a thinner one than was calculated on.—I am, gentlemen, yours truly, C. BRONTË.

Letter 189

TO AYLOTT & JONES

April 20, 1846.

GENTLEMEN,—The poems are to be neatly done up in cloth. Have the goodness to send copies and advertisements, *as early as possible*, to each of the undermentioned periodicals:—

Colburn's New Monthly Magazine.
Bentley's Magazine.
Hood's Magazine.
Jerrold's Shilling Magazine.
Blackwood's Magazine.
The Edinburgh Review.
Tait's Edinburgh Magazine.
The Dublin University Magazine.

Also to the *Daily News* and to the *Britannia* newspapers.—I am, gentlemen, yours truly, C. BRONTË.

Letter 190

TO AYLOTT & JONES

May 11th, 1846.

GENTLEMEN,—The books may be done up in the style of Moxon's duodecimo edition of Wordsworth.

The price may be fixed at 5s., or if you think that too much for the size of the volume, say 4s.

I think the periodicals I mentioned in my last will be sufficient for advertising in at present, and I should not wish you to lay out a larger sum than £2, especially as the estimate is increased by nearly £5, in consequence, it appears, of a mistake. I should think the success of a work depends more on the notice it receives from periodicals, than on the quantity of advertisements.

If you do not object, the additional amount of the estimate can be remitted when you send in your account at the end of the first six months.

I should be obliged to you if you could let me know how soon copies can be sent to the editors of the magazines and newspapers specified.—I am, gentlemen, yours truly, C. BRONTË.

Letter 191

TO AYLOTT & JONES

May 25th, 1846.

GENTLEMEN,—I received yours of the 22nd this morning. I now transmit £5, being the additional sum necessary to defray the entire expense of paper and printing. It will leave a small surplus of 11s. 9d., which you can place to my account.

I am glad you have sent copies to the newspapers you mention, and in case of a notice favourable or otherwise appearing in them, or in any of the other periodicals to which copies have been sent, I should be obliged to you if you would send me down the numbers; otherwise, I have not the opportunity of seeing these publications regularly. I might miss it, and should the poems be remarked upon favourably, it is my intention to appropriate a further sum to advertisements. If, on the other hand, they should pass unnoticed or be condemned, I consider it would be quite useless to advertise, as there is nothing either in the title of the work or the names of the authors to attract attention from a single individual.—I am, gentlemen, yours truly, C. BRONTË.

Letter 192

TO AYLOTT & JONES

July 10th, 1846.

GENTLEMEN,—I am directed by the Messrs. Bell to acknowledge the receipt of the *Critic* and the *Athenæum* containing notices of the poems.

They now think that a further sum of £10 may be devoted to advertisements, leaving it to you to select such channels as you deem most advisable.

They would wish the following extract from the *Critic* to be appended to each advertisement:—

'They in whose hearts are chords strung by Nature to sympathise with the beautiful and the true, will recognise in these compositions the presence of more genius than it was supposed

this utilitarian age had devoted to the loftier exercises of the intellect.'

They likewise request you to send copies of the poems to *Fraser's Magazine*, *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, the *Globe*, and *Examiner*.—I am, gentlemen, yours truly, C. BRONTË.

The book then was published, and the title-page ran as follows :—

Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell. London: *Aylott and Jones*, 8 *Paternoster Row*. 1846.

Two years later the unbound copies were issued with a title-page bearing the imprint of Smith, Elder, & Co., and the same date, 1846, although the sheets were not taken over by Smith, Elder, & Co. until 1848.

The book secured reviews such as any volume of verse might obtain, and the kind of reception from the public that, then as now, verse, when it is real poetry, always commands—two copies were sold. The *Athenaeum* critic declared that Ellis possessed 'a fine quaint spirit' and 'an evident power of wing that may reach heights not here attempted.' Here is a letter of thanks to a critic.

Letter 193

TO THE EDITOR OF THE 'DUBLIN UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE

October 6th, 1846.

SIR,—I thank you in my own name and that of my brothers, Ellis and Acton, for the indulgent notice that appeared in your last number of our first humble efforts in literature ; but I thank you far more for the essay on modern poetry which preceded that notice—an essay in which seems to me to be condensed the very spirit of truth and beauty. If all or half your other readers shall have derived from its perusal the delight it afforded to myself and my brothers, your labours have produced a rich result.

After such criticism an author may indeed be smitten at first by a sense of his own insignificance—as we were—but on a second and a third perusal he finds a power and beauty therein which stirs him to a desire to do more and better things. It fulfils the right end of criticism : without absolutely crushing, it corrects

and rouses. I again thank you heartily, and beg to subscribe myself,—Your constant and grateful reader,

CURRER BELL.

While treating of the *Poems*, I may as well carry the correspondence a stage further. Six or eight months later Charlotte Brontë sent copies of the little volume to several of the leading authors of the day. Reference to the biographies of Wordsworth, Tennyson, Lockhart, and De Quincey shows that the same letter accompanied each little volume.

Letter 194

TO THOMAS DE QUINCEY

June 16th, 1847.

SIR,—My relatives, Ellis and Acton Bell, and myself, heedless of the repeated warnings of various respectable publishers, have committed the rash act of printing a volume of poems.

The consequences predicted have, of course, overtaken us: our book is found to be a drug; no man needs it or heeds it. In the space of a year our publisher has disposed but of two copies, and by what painful efforts he succeeded in getting rid of these two, himself only knows.

Before transferring the edition to the trunkmakers, we have decided on distributing as presents a few copies of what we cannot sell; and we beg to offer you one in acknowledgment of the pleasure and profit we have often and long derived from your works.—I am, sir, yours very respectfully, CURRER BELL.[1]

Apart from this tantalising and exciting venture into book-publishing concerning which the three sisters did not breathe a word to any member of their household, and not even to Ellen Nussey, all the history of the year is contained in letters to her friend.

Letter 195

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

March 31st, '46.

DEAR ELLEN,—I begin to feel somewhat uneasy about your long silence. Is all well at Brookroyd? I have sometimes

[1] *De Quincey Memorials*, by Alexander H. Japp. See also *Alfred, Lord Tennyson: a Memoir*, by his son, 1898, and Lockhart's *Life* by Andrew Lang, 1897.

feared your mother is worse, for the late sharp change in the weather has been a most trying one for many weak and elderly persons about here.

Our poor old servant Tabby had a sort of fit a fortnight since, but is nearly recovered now. Martha is ill with a swelling in her knee, and obliged to go home. I fear it will be some time before she will be in working condition again. I received the number of the *Record* you sent, and sent it forward to Mr. Young. I read D'Aubigné's letter.[1] It is clever, and in what he says about Catholicism very good. The Evangelical Alliance part is not very practicable, yet certainly it is more in accordance with the spirit of the Gospel to preach unity among Christians than to inculcate mutual intolerance and hatred. Any visits from Hunsworth lately? I begin to be anxious to hear again from Mary Taylor. I am very glad I went to Brookroyd when I did, for the changed weather has somewhat changed my health and strength since. How do you get on? I long for mild south and west winds. I am thankful papa continues pretty well, though often made very miserable by Branwell's wretched conduct. *There*—there is no change but for the worse.

I have no news to tell you, and I only scribble these few lines to entreat you to write to me immediately. I sent you a French newspaper yesterday.

Good-morning. Love to all. C. BRONTË.

Letter 196

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

April 14*th*, '46.

DEAR ELLEN,—I assure you I was very glad indeed to get your last note—for when three or four days elapsed after my second despatch to you and I got no answer, I scarcely doubted something was wrong. It relieved me much to find my apprehensions unfounded. I return you Miss Ringrose's notes with thanks. I always like to read them, they appear to me so true an index of an amiable mind, and one not too conscious of its own worth; beware of awakening in her this consciousness by undue praise. It is the privilege of simple-hearted, sensible but not brilliant

[1] Jean Henri Merle D'Aubigné (1794-1872), born near Geneva. In 1818 he became pastor of the French Protestant Church at Hamburg, and in 1823, the Court preacher at Brussels. He returned to Geneva after 1830. His *History of the Reformation* is his best known book.

people—that they can *be* and *do* good without comparing their own thoughts and actions too closely with those of other people, and thence drawing strong food for self-appreciation. Talented people almost always know full well the excellence that is in them. I am very glad that you have seen George; still, the interview must have been a painful one in many respects. It disappointed me rather that you mentioned it so briefly. How did he receive you? Joe Taylor has performed a good action in the best manner. You ask if we are more comfortable. I wish I could say anything favourable, but how can we be more comfortable so long as Branwell stays at home, and degenerates instead of improving? It has been lately intimated to him, that he would be received again on the railroad where he was formerly stationed if he would behave more steadily, but he refuses to make an effort; he will not work—and at home he is a drain on every resource—an impediment to all happiness. But there is no use in complaining.

My love to all. Write again soon. C. B.

Letter 197

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

June '46.

DEAR ELLEN,—I hope all the mournful contingencies of death are by this time removed from Brookroyd, and that some little sense of relief is beginning to be experienced by its wearied inmates. —— suffered greatly. I trust and even believe that his long sufferings on earth will be taken as sufficient expiation. I wish you all may get a little repose and enjoyment now. I should like to hear from you shortly, and whether any new plans are in contemplation about poor George. Give my love to all. C. BRONTË.

Letter 198

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

June 17th, '46.

DEAR ELLEN,—I was glad to perceive by the tone of your last letter, that you are beginning to be a little more settled and comfortable. I should think Dr. Belcombe is quite right in opposing George's removal home. We, I am sorry to say, have been somewhat more harassed than usual lately. The death of Mr. Robinson, which took place about three weeks or a month ago, served

Branwell for a pretext to throw all about him into hubbub and confusion with his emotions, etc., etc. Shortly after, came news from all hands that Mr. Robinson had altered his will before he died and effectually prevented all chance of a marriage between his widow and Branwell, by stipulating that she should not have a shilling if she ever ventured to reopen any communication with him. Of course, he then became intolerable. To papa he allows rest neither day nor night, and he is continually screwing money out of him, sometimes threatening that he will kill himself if it is withheld from him. He says Mrs. Robinson is now insane; that her mind is a complete wreck owing to remorse for her conduct towards Mr. Robinson (whose end it appears was hastened by distress of mind) and grief for having lost him. I do not know how much to believe of what he says, but I fear she is very ill. Branwell declares that he neither can nor will do anything for himself; good situations have been offered him more than once, for which, by a fortnight's work, he might have qualified himself, but he will do nothing, except drink and make us all wretched. I had a note from Ellen Taylor a week ago, in which she remarks that letters were received from New Zealand a month since, and that all was well. I should like to hear from you again soon. I hope one day to see Brookroyd again, though I think it will not be yet—these are not times of amusement. Love to all. C. B.

Letter 199

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

July 10*th*, '46.

DEAR ELLEN,—I see you are in a dilemma, and one of a peculiar and difficult nature. Two paths lie before you, you conscientiously wish to choose the right one, even though it be the most steep, strait and rugged; but you do not know which is the right one; you cannot decide whether duty and religion command you to go out into the cold and friendless world, and there to earn your *bread* by governess drudgery, or whether they enjoin your continued stay with your aged mother, neglecting, *for the present*, every prospect of independency for yourself, and putting up with daily inconvenience, sometimes even with privations. Dear Ellen, I can well imagine, that it is next to impossible for you to decide for yourself in this matter, so I will decide it for you. At least I will tell you what is my earnest conviction on the subject; I will show you candidly how the question strikes

me. The right path is that which necessitates the greatest sacrifice of self-interest—which implies the greatest good to others; and this path, steadily followed, will lead, I believe, in time, to prosperity and to happiness; though it may seem, at the outset, to tend quite in a *contrary direction*. Your mother is both old and infirm; old and infirm people have few sources of happiness, fewer almost than the comparatively young and healthy can conceive; to deprive them of one of these is cruel. If your mother is more composed when you are with her, stay with her. If she would be unhappy in case you left her, stay with her. It will not apparently, as far as short-sighted humanity can see, be for *your* advantage to remain at Brookroyd, nor will you be praised and admired for remaining at home to comfort your mother; yet, probably, your own conscience will approve, and if it does, stay with her. I recommend you to do what I am trying to do myself. Who gravely asked you whether Miss Brontë was not going to be married to her Papa's Curate? I scarcely need say that never was rumour more unfounded. A cold far-away sort of civility are the only terms on which I have ever been with Mr. Nicholls. I could by no means think of mentioning such a rumour to him even as a joke. It would make me the laughing-stock of himself and his fellow curates for half a year to come. They regard me as an old maid, and I regard them, one and all, as highly uninteresting, narrow and unattractive specimens of the coarser sex.

Write to me again soon, whether you have anything particular to say or not. Give my sincere love to your mother and sisters.

C. BRONTË.

The enigmas are very smart and well worded.

Letter 200

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

July 24th, '46.

DEAR ELLEN,—A series of tooth-aches, prolonged and severe, bothering me both day and night, have kept me very stupid of late, and prevented me from writing to you. More than once I have sat down and opened my desk, but have not been able to get up to par;—to-day, after a night of fierce pain, I am better—much better, and I take advantage of the interval of ease to discharge my debt. I wish I had £50 to spare at present, and that you, Emily, Anne and I, were all at liberty to leave home without our absence being detrimental to anybody. How pleasant to set

off *en masse* to the sea-side, and stay there a few weeks taking in a stock of health and strength.—We could all do with recreation. I retain Miss Ringrose's 'portrait.' It is skilfully painted—a little flattering to be exposed to the view of the original—but it gives a stranger a sweet and attractive idea of 'notre Amélie.' I will not attempt a companion picture of *my friend*, for it is unnecessary. Miss Ringrose's own letters had delineated her clearly and faithfully enough without the aid of this finished miniature; and yours will, I know, do for you the same office, independently of elaborate assistance from me.

You have acted well, very well, in telling Miss Ringrose the simple truth respecting the position of your family. Adversity agrees with you, Ellen. Your good qualities are never so obvious as when under the pressure of affliction. Continued prosperity might develop too much a certain germ of ambition latent in your character. I saw this little germ putting out green shoots when I was staying with you at Hathersage. It was not then obtrusive, and perhaps might never become so. Your good sense, firm principle, and kind feeling, might keep it down; but if riches were ever to accrue to you, I prophesy that your many virtues would have a severe struggle with this one defect. Still I wish Fortune would try you, but not with too strong a temptation. Holding down my head does not suit my tooth-ache. Give my love to your mother and sisters. Write again as soon as may be.—Yours faithfully, C. B.

Letter 201

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

August 9th, 1846.

DEAR NELL,—Anne and I both thank you for your kind invitation, and our thanks are not mere words of course—they are very sincere, both as addressed to yourself and your mother and sisters, but we cannot accept it, and I *think* even *you* will consider our motives for declining valid this time.

In a fortnight I hope to go with papa to Manchester to have his eyes couched. Emily and I made a pilgrimage there a week ago to search out an operator, and we found one in the person of Mr. Wilson. He could not tell from the description whether the eyes were ready for an operation. Papa must therefore necessarily take a journey to Manchester to consult him. If he judges the cataract ripe, we shall remain,—if, on the contrary, he thinks it not yet sufficiently hardened, we shall have to return—and papa must

remain in darkness a while longer. Poor Bessy H.! I was thinking about her only a day or two before. Do you know whether she suffered much pain, or whether her death was easy?

There is a defect in your reasoning about the feelings a wife ought to experience. Who holds the purse will wish to be master, Ellen, depend on it, whether man or woman. Who provided the cash will now and then value himself or herself upon it, and even in the case of ordinary minds, reproach the less wealthy partner.—Besides, no husband ought to be an object of charity to his wife, as no wife to her husband. No, dear Ellen, it is doubtless pleasant to marry *well*, as they say, but with all pleasures are mixed bitters. I do not wish for you a very rich husband, I should not like you to be regarded by any man ever as 'a sweet object of charity.' Give my sincere love to all.—Yours, C. BRONTË.

Letter 202

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

83 MOUNT PLEASANT, BOUNDARY ST., OXFORD ROAD,
MANCHESTER, *August 21st*, '46.

DEAR ELLEN,—I just scribble a line to let you know where I am, in order that you may write to me here, for it seems to me that a letter from you would relieve me from the feeling of strangeness I have in this big town. Papa and I came here on Wednesday; we saw Mr. Wilson,[1] the oculist, the same day; he pronounced papa's eyes quite ready for an operation, and has fixed next Monday for the performance of it. Think of us on that day! We got into our lodgings yesterday. I think we shall be comfortable; at least, our rooms are very good, but there is no mistress of the house (she is very ill, and gone out into the country), and I am somewhat puzzled in managing about provisions; we board ourselves. I find myself excessively ignorant. I can't tell what to order in the way of meat. For ourselves I could contrive, papa's diet is so very simple; but there will be a nurse coming in a day or two, and I am afraid of not having things good enough for her. Papa requires nothing, you know, but plain beef and mutton, tea and bread and butter; but a nurse

[1] Dr. William James Wilson, M.R.C.S., was born at Leeds, but the exact date is not known. He was honorary surgeon to the Manchester Infirmary from 1826 to 1855, and was mainly instrumental in founding the Manchester Institution for curing diseases of the eye. He died at Tickwood, near Wellington, 19th July 1855. See *Honorary Medical Staff of the Manchester Infirmary*, by Dr. E. M. Brockbank. 4to. 1904. Pp. 269-272.

will probably expect to live much better; give me some hints if you can. Mr. Wilson says we shall have to stay here for a month at least. It will be dreary. I wonder how poor Emily and Anne will get on at home with Branwell? They too will have their troubles. What would I not give to have you here! One is forced, step by step, to get experience in the world; but the learning is so disagreeable. One cheerful feature in the business is that Mr. Wilson thinks most favourably of the case. Write very soon—remember me kindly to all.—Yours, C. BRONTË.

Letter 203

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

MANCHESTER, *August 26th*, '46.

DEAR ELLEN,—The operation is over; it took place yesterday. Mr. Wilson performed it; two other surgeons assisted. Mr. Wilson says he considers it quite successful; but papa cannot yet see anything. The affair lasted precisely a quarter of an hour; it was not the simple operation of couching Mr. Carr described, but the more complicated one of extracting the cataract. Mr. Wilson entirely disapproves of couching. Papa displayed extraordinary patience and firmness; the surgeons seemed surprised. I was in the room all the time, as it was his wish that I should be there; of course, I neither spoke nor moved till the thing was done, and then I felt that the less I said, either to papa or the surgeons, the better. Papa is now confined to his bed in a dark room, and is not to be stirred for four days; he is to speak and be spoken to as little as possible. I am greatly obliged to you for your letter and your kind advice, which gave me extreme satisfaction, because I found I had arranged most things in accordance with it, and, as your theory coincides with my practice, I feel assured the latter is right. I hope Mr. Wilson will soon allow me to dispense with the nurse; she is well enough, no doubt, but somewhat too obsequious, and not, I should think, to be much trusted; yet I am obliged to trust her in some things. Your friend Charlotte has had a letter from M. T., and she was only waiting to hear from one Ellen Nussey, that she had received a similar document. Greatly was I amused by your account of Joe's flirtations, and yet somewhat saddened also. I think Nature intended him for something better than to fritter away his time in making a set of poor, unoccupied spinsters unhappy. The girls, unfortunately, are forced to care for him, because, while their minds are mostly unemployed,

their sensations are all unworn, and consequently, fresh and keen; and he, on the contrary, has had his fill of pleasure, and can with impunity make a mere pastime of other people's torments. This is an unfair state of things; the match is not equal. I only wish I had the power to infuse into the souls of the persecuted a little of the quiet strength of pride,—of the supporting consciousness of superiority (for they are superior to him, because purer), of the fortifying resolve of firmness to bear the present, and wait the end. Could all the virgin population of Birstall and Gomersall receive and retain these sentiments, he would eventually have to vail his crest before them. Perhaps, luckily, their feelings are not so acute as one would think, and the gentleman's shafts consequently don't wound so deeply as he might desire. I hope it is so. Give my best love to your mother and sisters. Write soon.

C. BRONTË.

Letter 204

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

MANCHESTER, *August* 31*st*, '46.

DEAR ELLEN,—Thank you for Mary Taylor's letter. It contains later news than mine, and good news too. Papa is still lying in bed, in a dark room, with his eyes bandaged. No inflammation ensued, but still it appears the greatest care, perfect quiet, and utter privation of light are necessary to ensure a good result from the operation. He is very patient, but of course depressed and weary. He was allowed to try his sight for the first time yesterday. He could see dimly. Mr. Wilson seemed perfectly satisfied, and said all was right. I have had bad nights from the toothache since I came to Manchester. Give my sincere love to Miss Wooler when you see her. Give her my address too. In great haste; love to all, and hopes and good wishes for George. Yours,

C. B.

Letter 205

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

MANCHESTER, *September* 13*th*, '46.

DEAR ELLEN,—Papa thinks his own progress rather slow, but the doctor affirms he is getting on very well. He complains of extreme weakness and soreness in the eye, but I suppose that is

to be expected for some time to come. He is still kept in the dark, but now sits up the greater part of the day, and is allowed a little fire in the room from the light of which he is carefully screened.

By this time you will have got Mary's letters; most interesting they are, and she is in her element because she is where she has a toilsome task to perform, an important improvement to effect, a weak vessel to strengthen. You ask if I have any enjoyment here; in truth, I can't say I have—and I long to get home, though, unhappily, home is not now a place of complete rest. It is sad to think how it is disquieted by a constant phantom, or rather two—sin and suffering; they seem to obscure the cheerfulness of day and to disturb the comfort of evening.

Give my love to all at Brookroyd, and believe me, yours faithfully, C. B.

P.S.—I am sorry for Joe. Does Ellen Taylor live at Hunsworth now?

Letter 206

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

MANCHESTER, *September 22nd*, '46.

DEAR ELLEN,—I have nothing new to tell you except that papa continues to do well, though the process of recovery appears to me very tedious. I dare say it will yet be many weeks before his sight is completely restored, yet every time Mr. Wilson comes, he expresses his satisfaction at the perfect success of the operation, and assures me papa will ere long be able to both read and write. He is still a prisoner in his dark room, into which, however, a little more light is admitted than formerly. The nurse goes to-day; her departure will certainly be a relief, though she is, I dare say, not the worst of her class. Write to me again soon, and believe me, yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

Letter 207

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *September 28th*, '46.

DEAR ELLEN,—When I wrote to you last, our return to Haworth was uncertain indeed, but Mr. Wilson was called away

to Scotland; his absence set us at liberty. I hastened our departure, and now we are at home. Papa is daily gaining strength; he cannot yet exercise his sight much—but it improves, and I have no doubt will continue to do so. I feel truly thankful for the good ensured, and the evil exempted during our absence. What you say about Joe grieves me much, and surprises me too. Mary Taylor sits on a wooden stool without a back, in a log house without a carpet, and neither is degraded nor thinks herself degraded by such poor accommodation. C. BRONTË.

Letter 208

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

October 14*th*, '46.

DEAR ELLEN,—I read your letter with attention, not on my own account, for any project which infers the necessity of my leaving home is impracticable to me. If I could leave home I should not be at Haworth now—I know life is passing away and I am doing nothing, earning nothing—a very bitter knowledge it is at moments—but I see no way out of the mist. More than one very favourable opportunity has now offered which I have been obliged to put aside; probably when I am free to leave home I shall neither be able to find a place nor employment; perhaps, too, I shall be quite past the prime of life, my faculties will be rusted, and my few acquirements in a great measure forgotten. These ideas sting me keenly sometimes; but whenever I consult my conscience, it affirms that I am doing right in staying at home, and bitter are its upbraidings when I yield to an eager desire for release. I returned to Brussels after aunt's death against my conscience, prompted by what then seemed an irresistible impulse. I was punished for my selfish folly by a total withdrawal for more than two years of happiness and peace of mind. I could hardly expect success if I were to err again in the same way.

I should like to hear from you again soon. Bring R. to the point, and make him give you a clear, not a vague, account of what pupils he really could procure; people often think they can do great things in that way till they have tried; but getting pupils is unlike getting any other sort of goods.

C. BRONTË.

Letter 209

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

November 17*th*, '46.

DEAR ELLEN,—I will just write a brief despatch to say that I received yours, and that I was very glad to get it. I do not know when you have been so long without writing to me before; I had begun to imagine you were gone to your brother Joshua's.

Papa continues to do very well. He read prayers twice in the church last Sunday. Next Sunday he will have to take the whole duty of the three services himself, as Mr. Nicholls is in Ireland. Remember me to your mother and sisters. Write as soon as you possibly can, after you get to Oundle. Good luck go with you.

C. BRONTË.

Letter 210

TO MISS WOOLER

Papa's spirits are improved since his restoration to sight. This last circumstance alone furnishes a continual subject for gratitude; those were indeed mournful days—when papa's vision was wholly obscured, when he could do nothing for himself, and sat all day long in darkness and inertion. *Now* to see him walk about independently, read, write, etc., is indeed a joyful change.

There is still one point on which I do not feel quite easy—it is that he continues to see spots before the very eye which has been operated on, and from which the lens is removed; he mentioned the circumstance to Mr. Wilson, who put it off as a matter of no consequence, but without offering any explanation of the cause or nature of the appearance. I should much like to know Mr. Wilson's opinion on the point. Will you ask him some day when you have an opportunity?

I pity Mr. Taylor from my heart. For ten years he has now, I think, been a sufferer from nervous complaints, for ten years he has felt the tyranny of Hypochondria, a most dreadful doom, far worse than that of a man with healthy nerves buried for the same length of time in a subterranean dungeon. I endured it but a year, and assuredly I can never forget the concentrated anguish of certain insufferable moments, and the heavy gloom of many long hours, besides the preternatural horrors which seemed to clothe existence and nature, and which made life a continual waking

nightmare. Under such circumstances the morbid nerves can know neither peace nor enjoyment; whatever touches pierces them, sensation for them is suffering. A weary burden nervous patients become to those about them; they know this and it infuses a new gall, corrosive in its extreme acritude, into their bitter cup. When I was at Dewsbury Moor I could have been no better company for you than a stalking ghost, and I remember I felt my incapacity to *impart* pleasure fully as much as my powerlessness to *receive* it. Mr. Taylor, no doubt, feels the same. How grievous, with his principles, talents, and acquirements.

Letter 211

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

December 15*th*, '46.

DEAR ELLEN,—I hope you are not frozen up in Northamptonshire; the cold here is dreadful. I do not remember such a series of North-Pole days. England might really have taken a slide up into the Arctic Zone: the sky looks like ice; the earth is frozen; the wind is as keen as a two-edged blade. I cannot keep myself warm. We have all had severe colds and coughs in consequence of the severe weather. Poor Anne has suffered greatly from asthma, but is now, I am glad to say, rather better. She had two nights last week when her cough and difficulty of breathing were painful indeed to hear and witness, and must have been most distressing to suffer; she bore it, as she does all affliction, without one complaint, only sighing now and then when nearly worn out. She has an extraordinary heroism of endurance. I admire, but I certainly could not imitate her. . . . You say I am to tell you plenty. What would you have me say? Nothing happens at Haworth; nothing, at least, of a pleasant kind. One little incident occurred about a week ago to sting us to life; but if it gives no more pleasure for you to hear than it did for us to witness, you will scarcely thank me for adverting to it. It was merely the arrival of a sheriff's officer on a visit to Branwell, inviting him either to pay his debts or take a trip to York. Of course his debts had to be paid. It is not agreeable to lose money, time after time, in this way; but it is ten times worse to witness the shabbiness of his behaviour on such occasions; but where is the use of dwelling on such subjects? It will make him no better. I send you the last French newspaper; several have missed coming.

Do you intend paying a visit to Sussex before you return home? Write again soon; your last epistle was very interesting.—I am, dear Nell, yours in spirit and flesh, C. B.

Letter 212

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

December 28*th*, 1846.

DEAR ELLEN,—I feel as if it was almost a farce to sit down and write to you now, with nothing to say worth listening to; and, indeed, if it were not for two reasons, I should put off the business at least a fortnight hence. The first reason is, I want another letter from you, for your letters are interesting, they have something in them; some information, some results of experience and observation. One receives them with pleasure, and reads them with relish; and these letters I cannot expect to get unless I reply to them. I wish the correspondence could be so managed so as to be all on your side. The second reason is derived from a remark in your last, that you felt lonely, something as I was at Stonegappe and Brussels, and that consequently you had a peculiar desire to hear from old acquaintance. I can understand and sympathise with this. I remember the shortest note was a treat to me when I was at the above-named places; therefore I now write. I have also a third reason: it is a haunting terror lest you should imagine I forget you—that my regard cools with absence. Nothing irritates and stings me like this. It is not in my nature to forget your nature; though I dare say, I should spit fire and explode sometimes if we lived together continually; and you too would be angry now and then, and then we should get reconciled and jog on as before. Do you ever get dissatisfied with your own temper when you are long fixed to one place, in one scene, subjected to one monotonous species of annoyance? I do: I am now in that unenviable frame of mind; my humour, I think, is too soon overthrown, too sore, too demonstrative and vehement. I almost long for some of the uniform serenity you describe in Mrs. ——'s disposition; or, at least, I would fain have her power of self-control and concealment; but I would not take her artificial habits and ideas along with her composure. After all, I should prefer being as I am. You do right not to be annoyed at any nuisances of conventionality you meet with. Regard all new ways in the light of fresh experience for you: if you see any

honey, gather it. (See *Punch*.)[1] I don't, after all, consider that we ought to despise everything in the world, merely because it is not what we are accustomed to. I suspect, on the contrary, that there are not unfrequently substantial reasons underlaid, for customs that appear to us absurd; AND IF I WERE EVER AGAIN TO FIND MYSELF AMONGST STRANGERS, I SHOULD BE SOLICITOUS TO EXAMINE BEFORE I CONDEMNED. Indiscriminating irony and fault-finding are just *sumphishness*, and that is all. Anne is now much better, but papa has been for near a fortnight far from well with the influenza; he has at times a most distressing cough, and his spirits are much depressed. This cold weather would try anybody.

I wish you a happy Christmas; write again soon. C. B.

Letter 213

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

January —, '47.

DEAR ELLEN,—I thank you again for your last letter, which I found as full or fuller of interest than either of the preceding ones; it is just written as I wish you to write to me,—not a detail too much,—a correspondence of that sort is the next best thing to actual conversation—though it must be allowed that between the two there is a wide gulf still.

I imagine your face, voice, presence, very plainly when I read your letters; still, imagination is not reality, and when I return them to their envelopes, and put them by in my desk—I feel the difference sensibly enough. *My curiosity is a little piqued about that Countess you mention.*

I cannot decide from what you say whether *she* is really clever or only eccentric; the two sometimes go together but are often seen apart. I generally feel inclined to fight very shy of eccentricity, and have no small horror of being thought eccentric myself, by which observation I don't mean to insinuate that I class myself under the head Clever; God knows, a more consummate ass in

[1] A recent number of *Punch* (No. 241, vol. x. p. 91, February 21, 1846) had contained a paper entitled 'Little Fables for Little Politicians.' The second of these fables, entitled 'The Drones,' sets forth how 'a swarm of drones lived for a number of years in a rich beehive, helping themselves to the best of the honey, and contributing nothing to the store.' Finally, the drones—that is to say, the Protectionists—were driven out by the bees; and *Punch* implores 'our venerable Dukes to have the above little Fable read to them at least once a day.'

sundry important points has seldom browsed the green herb of His bounties than I. Oh! dear, I 'm in danger sometimes of falling into self-weariness. . . . As to money, from all I can hear and see it seems to be regarded as the Alpha and Omega of requisites in a wife. As to society, I don't understand much about it, but from the few glimpses I have had of its machinery it seems to me to be a very strange, complicated affair indeed, wherein Nature is turned upside down. Your well-bred people appear to me (figuratively speaking) to walk on their heads, to see everything the wrong way up; a lie is with them truth,—truth a lie; eternal and tedious botheration is their notion of happiness, sensible pursuits their *ennui*. But this may be only the view ignorance takes of what it cannot understand. I refrain from judging them, therefore, but if I were called upon to 'swap' (you know the word, I suppose?), to swap tastes and ideas and feelings, I should prefer walking into a good Yorkshire kitchen fire, and conclude the bargain at once by an act of voluntary combustion.

All here is as usual. Write again soon.—Yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

Letter 214

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

January 28th, '47.

DEAR NELL,—I got your letter, but it had been opened—the paper was burnt in melting the wax, and an unsuccessful attempt had been made to reseal it with a blank seal—fortunately the contents were not abstracted. The pretty little cuffs were safe, and I am obliged for them—they are just the sort of thing I wanted to keep my wrists warm.

I am truly glad you are safe at home. Was not your mother delighted to see you? I wish somebody would have the sense to leave you a fortune of £10,000 or so—it would be fun to witness the servile adulation of such people as Mr. and Mrs. ——. There—I am afraid, however, there is no chance of such a prize falling to your share out of the wheel of fortune. I must say that from what you say of the coldness, dreariness, and barrenness of these respected individuals' minds and hearts, I pity them full as much as I dislike them.

To-day you will be at W——. It is too late to tell you to adopt the white and scarlet by all means—you know I always consider that white suits you. Be sure and tell me all about the party—I

hope Joe and John Taylor will not fail to be there, and to lay themselves out properly to your observation.

I had a note—a very short one—from Ellen Taylor yesterday—I had not heard from her before for months. They had just received letters from Waring, but none from Mary—both were well. Don't think of my coming to Brookroyd yet, Ellen—perhaps before the summer is over we may meet again, but let the matter rest at present. I am sorry to hear of your sister Ann's bad health—I fear she makes herself too anxious, and constant anxiety will wear any nerves and fibres. Give my very best love to them all, and say I thank them sincerely for their kind remembrance of me.

What is it that makes Mrs. . . . such a very disagreeable person, and that renders her own friends so anxious to be rid of her? Is her upper story sound? Write again to me as soon as ever you can.—Yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

Letter 215

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

February 8th, '47.

DEAR ELLEN,—I shall scribble you a short note about nothing, just to have a pretext for screwing a letter out of you in return. I was sorry you did not go to Woodhouse, firstly because you lost the pleasure of observation and enjoyment, and secondly because I lost the second-hand indulgence of hearing your account of what you had seen. It was stupid of Mr. and Mrs. Richard not to think of asking you when they asked the Taylors. I laughed at the candour with which you quote your reason for wishing to be there. Thou hast an honest soul, Nell, as ever animated human frame, and a clean one, for it is not ashamed of showing its inmost recesses, only be careful with whom you are frank—some would not rightly appreciate the value of your frankness—and never cast pearls before swine.

You are quite right in wishing to look well in the eyes of those whom you desire to please; it is natural to desire to appear to advantage (*honest*, not *false* advantage, of course) before people we respect. Long may the power and inclination to do so be spared you. Long may you look young and handsome enough to dress in white, dear Nell, and long may you have a right to feel the consciousness that you look agreeable. I know you have too much

judgment to let an overdose of vanity spoil the blessing and turn it into a misfortune. After all, though, age will come on, and it is well you have something better than a nice face for friends to turn to when that is changed. I hope this excessively cold weather has not harmed you or yours much. It has nipped me severely, taken away my appetite for a while, and given me toothache; in short, put me in the ailing condition in which I have more than once had the honour of making myself such a nuisance both at Brookroyd and Hunsworth. The consequence is that at this present speaking I look almost old enough to be your mother —grey, sunk, and withered. To-day, however, it is milder, and I hope soon to feel better; indeed, I am not *ill* now, and my toothache is now subsided, but I experience a loss of strength and a deficiency of spirit which would make me a sorry companion to you or any one else. I would not be on a visit now for a large sum of money.

Write soon. Give my best love to your mother and sisters.— Good-bye, dear Nell, C. BRONTË.

Letter 216

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *March 1st*, '47.

DEAR ELLEN,—Even at the risk of appearing very exacting, I can't help saying that I should like a letter as long as your last every time you write. Short notes give one the feeling of a very small piece of a very good thing to eat—they set the appetite on edge, and don't satisfy it; a letter leaves you more contented; and yet, after all, I am very glad to get notes; so don't think, when you are pinched for time and materials, that it is useless to write a few lines. Be assured, a few lines are very acceptable as far as they go; and though I like long letters, I would by no means have you to make a task of writing them.

Dear Nell, as you wish to avoid making me uneasy, say nothing more about my coming to Brookroyd. Let your visit to Sussex be got over, let the summer arrive, and then we shall see how matters stand. To confess the truth, I really should like you to come to Haworth before I again go to Brookroyd, and it is natural and right that I should have this wish. To keep friendship in proper order, the *balance* of good offices must be preserved, otherwise a disquieting and anxious feeling creeps in, and destroys

mutual comfort. In summer and in fine weather, your visit here might be much better managed than in winter. We could go out more, be more independent of the house and of one room. Branwell has been conducting himself very badly lately. I expect from the extravagance of his behaviour, and from mysterious hints he drops (for he never will speak out plainly), that we shall be hearing news of fresh debts contracted by him soon. The Misses Robinson, who had entirely ceased their correspondence with Anne for half a year after their father's death, have lately recommenced it. For a fortnight they sent her a letter almost every day, crammed with warm protestations of endless esteem and gratitude. They speak with great affection too of their mother, and never make any allusion intimating acquaintance with her errors. We take special care that Branwell does not know of their writing to Anne. My health is better: I lay the blame of its feebleness on the cold weather, more than on an uneasy mind. For after all, I have many things to be thankful for. Write again soon. C. BRONTË.

Letter 217

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

March 24th, '47.

DEAR NELL,—As I am going to send the French newspaper to-day, I will send a line or two with it, just to ask how you are, and to request you to let me have another letter or note as soon as may be. I am sorry for poor Miss Ringrose. Do you think there is any chance of her father permitting her to visit you at Brookroyd? I wish he would, both for your sake and hers; she would have a comforter, and you a companion, and then you would let me alone awhile.

I should like you to be pleasantly occupied till I can ask you to come to Haworth with some prospect of making you decently comfortable. It is at Haworth, if all be well, that we must next see each other again. There was a word in your last note which I could not make out. After remarking that two of Miss Ringrose's younger sisters are far from well, you said Amy was very ——something—I don't know what—and then asked, could Miss Ringrose have learned this superstition in Holland? What superstition is it?

Did Miss Wooler come to Brookroyd on the occasion of

your mother's birthday? If so, was she well, and in good spirits? I owe you a grudge for giving Miss Wooler some very exaggerated account about my not being well and setting her on to urge my leaving home as quite a duty. I 'll take care not to tell you next time, when I think I am looking specially old and ugly; as if people could not have that privilege without being supposed to be at the last gasp! I shall be thirty-one next birthday. My youth is gone like a dream; and very little use have I ever made of it. What have I done these last thirty years? Precious little.

No arguments in the next epistle.—Yours faithfully,

C. B.

Letter 218

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

April 4th, '47.

DEAR NELL,—Your last letter amused and edified me exceedingly. I could not but laugh at your account of the fall in Birstall, yet I should by no means have liked to have made a third party in that exhibition. I have endured one fall in your company, and undergone one of your ill-timed laughs, and don't wish to repeat my experience. Allow me to compliment you on the skill with which you can seem to give an explanation without enlightening one one whit on the question. I know no more about Miss Ringrose's superstition than I did before. What *is* the superstition? When a dead body is limp what *is* the inference drawn?

It seems strange that —— should attempt to gloss over what is deplorable; such efforts are vain and never answer. We should not unnecessarily expose relations under such circumstances, but neither should we degrade ourselves and them by inventing false excuses.

Do you remember my telling you, or did I ever tell you, about that wretched and most criminal Mr. C——, after running an infamous career of vice, both in England and France, abandoned his wife—with two children and without a farthing—in a strange lodging-house? Yesterday evening Martha came upstairs to say that a woman, rather ladylike, she said, wished to speak to me in the kitchen. I went down: there stood Mrs. C——, pale and worn, but still interesting-looking and neatly dressed, as was her little girl who was with her. I kissed her heartily. I could

almost have cried to see her, for I had pitied her with my whole soul when I had heard of her undeserved sufferings and agonies and physical degradation. She took tea with us and entered frankly into the narrative of her appalling distresses; her excellent sense, her activity and perseverance, have enabled her to procure a respectable maintenance for herself and her children. She keeps a lodging-house at ——. She is now staying at —— House with the ——, who, I believe, have been all along very kind to her, and the circumstance is greatly to their credit.

I wish to know whether about Whitsuntide would suit you for coming to Haworth. We often have fine weather just then, at least I remember last year it was beautiful at that season. Winter seems to have returned with severity upon us at present, consequently we are all in the full enjoyment of colds; much blowing of noses is heard, and much making of gruel goes on in the house. How are you all? Give my best love to your mother, and believe me, yours, C. BRONTË.

Letter 219

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

April 21st, '47.

DEAR NELL,—I am very much obliged to you for your gift, which you must not undervalue, for I like the articles, they look extremely pretty and light. They are for wrist frills, are they not? Will you condescend to accept a scrubby yard of lace—made up into nothing? I thought I would not offer to spoil it by stitching it into any shape. Your creative fingers will turn it to better account than my destructive ones. I hope such as it is they will not pick it out of the envelope at the Bradford Post Office, where they generally take the liberty of opening letters when they feel soft as if they contained anything. I had forgotten all about your birthday and mine, till your letter arrived to remind me of it. I wish you many happy returns of yours. Are both Ann and Mercy from home? Of course, your visit to Haworth must be regulated by Miss Ringrose's movements. I was rather amused at your fearing I should be jealous. I never thought of it, Nell. She and I could not be rivals in your affections. You allot her, I know, a different set of feelings to what you allot me. She is peculiarly amiable and estimable, I am not amiable, but still we shall stick to the last I don't doubt. In short, I should as

soon think of being jealous of Emily and Anne in these days as of you. If Miss Ringrose does not come to Brookroyd about Whitsuntide, I should like you to come about the middle of the week before Whitsunday, if it suits you. I shall feel a good deal disappointed if the visit is put off—I would rather Miss Ringrose fixed her time in summer, and then I would come to see you (D.V.) in the autumn. I don't think it will be at all a good plan to go back with you. We see each other so seldom, that I would far rather divide the visits. I wish Mrs. N——'s daughter may be a nice child, and that you may get her for a pupil. Remember me to all. Any news about poor George lately?—Yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

Letter 220

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

May 12th, '47.

DEAR ELLEN,—We shall all be glad to see you on the Thursday or Friday of next week, whichever day will suit you best. About what time will you be likely to get here, and how will you come? By coach to Keighley, or by a gig all the way to Haworth? There must be no impediments now? I cannot do with them; I want very much to see you; I hope you will be decently comfortable while you stay.

Branwell is quieter now and for a good reason; he has got to the end of a considerable sum of money, and consequently is obliged to restrict himself in some degree. You must expect to find him weaker in mind, and a complete rake in appearance. I have no apprehension of his being at all uncivil to you; on the contrary, he will be as smooth as oil. I pray for fine weather that we may be able to get out while you stay. Good-bye for the present. Prepare for much dulness and monotony. Give my love to all at Brookroyd. Did you get Mary Taylor's letter?

C. BRONTË.

Letter 221

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

May 14th, '47.

DEAR ELLEN,—Your letter and its contents were most welcome. You must direct your luggage to Mr. Brontë's, and we will tell the carrier to inquire for it. The railroad has been opened some

time, but it only comes as far as Keighley. If you arrive about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, Emily, Anne, and I will all meet you at the station. We can take tea jovially together at the Devonshire Arms, and walk home in the cool of the evening. This arrangement will be much better than fagging through four miles in the heat of noon. Write by return of post if you can, and say if this plan suits you.—Yours, C. BRONTË.

Letter 222

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

May 17*th*, '47.

DEAR NELL,—Friday will suit us very well. I *do* trust nothing will now arise to prevent your coming. I shall be anxious about the weather on that day; if it rains, I shall cry. Don't expect me to meet you; where would be the good of it? I neither like to meet, nor to be met. Unless, indeed, you had a box or a basket for me to carry; then there would be some sense in it. Come in black, blue, pink, white, or scarlet, as you like. Come shabby or smart; neither the colour nor the condition signifies; provided only the dress contain Ellen Nussey, all will be right: *à bientôt.*

C. BRONTË.

Letter 223

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

May 20*th*, '47.

DEAR ELLEN,—Your letter of yesterday did indeed give me a cruel chill of disappointment. I cannot blame you, for I know it was not your fault. I do not altogether exempt —— from reproach. . . . This is bitter, but I feel bitter. As to going to Brookroyd, I will not go near the place till you have been to Haworth. My respects to all and sundry, accompanied with a large amount of wormwood and gall, from the effusion of which you and your mother are alone excepted. C. B.

You are quite at liberty to tell what I think, if you judge proper. Though it is true I may be somewhat unjust, for I am deeply annoyed. I thought I had arranged your visit tolerably comfortably for you this time. I may find it more difficult on another occasion.

Letter 224

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

May 25th, '47.

DEAR NELL,—I acknowledge I was in fault in my last letter, and that it was as you say quite unreasonable, especially as it regards Ann. After all, I cannot deny that she was in the right to take the chance that offered of going from home. I forgive her, and I hope she will forgive me for my cross words. . . . I have a small present for Mercy. You must fetch it, for I repeat you shall *come to Haworth before I go to Brookroyd.*

I do not say this from pique or anger, I am not angry now, but because my leaving home at present would from solid reasons be difficult to manage. If all be well I will visit you in the autumn, at present I *cannot* come. Be assured that if I could come I should, after your last letter, put scruples and pride away and 'go over into Macedonia' at once. I never could manage to help you yet. You have always found me something like a new servant, who requires to be told where everything is, and shown how everything is to be done.

My sincere love to your mother and Mercy.—Yours,

C. B.

Letter 225

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

June 5th, '47.

DEAR ELLEN,—I return you Mary Taylor's letter; it made me somewhat sad to read it, for I fear she is not quite content with her existence in New Zealand. She finds it too barren. I believe she is more home-sick than she will confess. Her gloomy ideas respecting you and me prove a state of mind far from gay. I have also received a letter, its tone is similar to your own and its contents too.

What brilliant weather we have had. Oh! Nell, I do indeed regret you could not come to Haworth at the time fixed, these warm sunny days would have suited us exactly; but it is not to be helped. Give my best love to your mother and Mercy.—Yours faithfully,

C. B.

Letter 226

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

June 29th, 1847.

DEAR ELLEN,—I return you Miss Ringrose's letter. I was amused by what she says respecting her wish that, when she marries, her husband will, at least, have a will of his own, even should he be a tyrant. Tell her, when she forms that aspiration again, she must make it conditional; if her husband has a strong will, he must also have strong sense, a kind heart, and a thoroughly correct notion of justice; because a man with a *weak brain, chill affections*, and a *strong will*, is merely an intractable fiend; you can have no hold of him; you can never lead him right. A *tyrant* under any circumstances is a curse.

When can you come to Haworth? Another period of fine weather is passing without you. I fear now your visit will be dull indeed, for it is doubtful whether there will even be a curate to enliven you. Mr. Nicholls is likely to get a district ere long. The whole duty is too much for papa at his age. He is pretty well, but often complains of weakness. Write again, and tell me how soon you are likely to come.—Yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

Letter 227

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

August 12th, '47.

DEAR ELLEN,—Your letter made us all serious enough, for though truly thankful that you escaped so well, one cannot but reflect, with a degree of horror, upon what might have happened; had a limb been broken, or had something worse taken place, what a dreadful conclusion to your visit here![1] What tidings to send to your mother! What news to send back to Haworth! Indeed, I am grateful it is no worse. May you be protected from every peril as effectually! It is evidently urgent that Miss Amelia Ringrose should have a change of scene; the sadness and oppression of mind are part of her complaint, which, it appears to me certain, is all on the nerves, and by that I do not mean she is fanciful—but that her mind is cramped in some points and over-wrought in

[1] A carriage accident.

others, and wants freedom and repose, both of which she will enjoy at Brookroyd, and therefore to Brookroyd it is to be hoped her parents will let her migrate *without the children.*

I received yesterday a letter from Miss Wooler—it is written under the impression that you were still with me—and she desires me to tell you with her love that she has at length procured a copy of the *Sunday Scholar's Christian Year*, and hopes soon to take it to Brookroyd. Miss Catherine, it appears, is gone on a visit to Scotland, and Miss Sarah has been spending some time at the house of a former pupil in London, where she had a livery servant daily at her disposal to accompany her to see all the Lions of the Capital—of which privilege, Miss W. says, she availed herself freely.

Give my best love to your mother and sisters. Emily and Anne unite in love to you.—Yours thankfully, C. B.

Letter 228

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

August 29*th*, '47.

DEAR ELLEN,—I am very glad to hear Miss Ringrose has come at last ; glad both for your sake and for hers. I know it would have been a severe disappointment to you had she failed to come, and I believe it would have been an injury to her had her visit been prohibited. You do not say how she is now, but I trust her health is improved since her arrival at Brookroyd. Cheerful change and congenial society is, I have no doubt, the best thing for her. As to my visit, Nell, I certainly *do* think in my own mind it would be more judicious to place an interval between Miss Ringrose's departure and my arrival, than to have us treading on each other's heels. Consider the matter, and when you have considered it ripely, I will be guided by your deliberate judgment, only be sure and give me a few days' notice whatever time you fix. And be sure also to take into consideration the convenience and inclinations of your mother and sisters. We have glorious weather for which we cannot be too thankful. I sincerely hope a day of general thanksgiving will be appointed after the harvest is got in. Write to me again soon.—Yours, C. B.

Letter 229

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

September 25th, '47.

DEAR NELL,—I got to Leeds all right at ten, but the train was just gone, and I had to cool my heels at the station for two hours. I had a very wet, windy walk home from Keighley ; but my fatigue quite disappeared when I reached home and found all well. Thank God for it.

My boxes came safe this morning. I have distributed the presents. Papa says I am to remember him most kindly to you. The screen will be very useful, and he thanks you for it. Tabby was charmed with her cap. She said, 'she never thought o' naught o' t' sort as Miss Nussey sending her aught, and she is sure, she can never thank her enough for it.' I was infuriated on finding a jar in my trunk. At first, I hoped it was empty, but when I found it heavy and replete, I could have hurled it all the way back to Birstall. However, the inscription A. B. softened me much. It was at once kind and villainous in you to send it. You ought first to be tenderly kissed, and then afterwards as tenderly whipped. Emily is just now sitting on the floor of the bedroom where I am writing, looking at her apples. She smiled when I gave them and the collar to her as your presents, with an expression at once well pleased and slightly surprised. Anne thanks you much. All send their love.

It appears Emily did send off a letter for me yesterday under the delusion that it would reach me by the evening post. Tell me what you had to pay for it, and I will send the amount in postage stamps.

Give my best love to your mother and Ann and Mary, and believe me,—Yours, in a mixture of anger and love, C. B.

Letter 230

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *October 4th*, '47.

MY DEAR MISS NUSSEY,—Many thanks to you for your unexpected and welcome epistle. Charlotte is well, and meditates writing to you. Happily for all parties the east wind no longer prevails. During its continuance she complained of its influence

as usual. I too suffered from it in some degree, as I always do, more or less; but this time, it brought me no reinforcement of colds and coughs which is what I dread the most. Emily considers it a very uninteresting wind, but it does not affect her nervous system. Charlotte agrees with me in thinking the ——[1] a very provoking affair. You are quite mistaken about her parasol, she affirms she brought it back and I can bear witness to the fact, having seen it yesterday in her possession. As for my book, I have no wish to see it again till I see you along with it, and then it will be welcome enough for the sake of the bearer. We are all here much as you left us. I have no news to tell you, except that Mr. Nicholls begged a holiday and went to Ireland three or four weeks ago, and is not expected back till Saturday, but that, I dare say, is no news at all. We were all and severally pleased and gratified for your kind and judiciously selected presents, from papa down to Tabby, or down to myself, perhaps I ought rather to say. The crab cheese is excellent and likely to be very useful, but I don't intend to need it. It is not choice, but necessity has induced me to choose such a tiny sheet of paper for my letter, having none more suitable at hand; but perhaps it will contain as much as you need wish to read, and I to write, for I find I have nothing more to say, except that your little Tabby must be a charming little creature. And——, and that is all, for as Charlotte is writing, or about to write to you herself, I need not send any messages from her. Therefore, accept my best love. I must not omit the Major's[2] compliments.—And believe me to be your affectionate friend, ANNE BRONTË.

Letter 231

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

October 7th, '47.

DEAR ELLEN,—I have been expecting you to write to me, but as you don't do it, and as moreover you may possibly think it is my turn, and not yours, though on that point I am far from clear, I shall just send you one of my scrubby notes for the express purpose of eliciting a reply. Anne was very much pleased with

[1] The original of this letter is lost, so that it is not possible to fill in the hiatus.

[2] Emily—who was called the Major, because on one occasion she guarded Miss Nussey from the attentions of Mr. Weightman during an evening walk.

your letter; I presume she has answered it before now. I would fain hope that her health is a little stronger than it was, and her spirits a little better, but she leads much too sedentary a life, and is continually sitting stooping either over a book or over her desk. It is with difficulty we can prevail upon her to take a walk or induce her to converse. I look forward to next summer with the confident intention that she shall—if possible—make at least a brief sojourn at the sea-side.

I am sorry I inoculated you with fears about the east wind. I did not feel the last blast so severely as I have often done. My sympathies were much awakened by the touching anecdote respecting you, Dr. Lewis, and Mrs. Jenkins. Did you salute your boy-messenger with a box on the ear the next time he came across you? I think I should have been strongly tempted to have done as much. Mr. Nicholls is not yet returned. I am sorry to say that many of the parishioners express a desire that he should not trouble himself to recross the Channel. This is not the feeling that ought to exist between shepherd and flock. It is not such as is prevalent at Birstall. It is not such as poor Mr. Weightman excited. Mr. and Mrs. Grant called a day or two ago, and were full of unintelligible apologies about not having paid you more attention while you were here. One cannot owe a grudge where no suffering is inflicted. When you write, dear Nell, be sure to tell me how Miss Ringrose is getting on; I certainly know few persons whom I have *not* seen that excite in me more interest than she does.

Give my best love to all, and believe me, yours faithfully,

C. Brontë.

CHAPTER XV

'THE PROFESSOR' AND 'JANE EYRE'

FULL justice has never been done to the real excellence of Charlotte Brontë's first novel *The Professor*. It was rejected by many publishers, and has been dispraised by competent critics, but to some of us it will always stand forth as a remarkable work of genius, inferior though it be to the three great romances that succeeded it from the same pen. Six publishers in succession rejected the manuscript. It returned again and again to the author, who with the inexperience of a novice often sent it off again on its travels in the tell-tale wrappers that told of previous rejections. Mrs. Gaskell informs us that it was actually returned by a short-sighted publisher while the author was at Manchester and on the very day that her father underwent his operation for the eyes. Mrs. Gaskell tells further of the courage with which she not only sent off *The Professor* once again upon its travels, but began a second novel—*Jane Eyre*—in a certain darkened room in Boundary Street, Manchester, while in attendance on her father. The first record of her book during these journeyings is contained in a letter to the firm which ultimately issued all her works.

Letter 232

TO MESSRS. SMITH, ELDER AND CO.

July 15th, 1847

GENTLEMEN,—I beg to submit to your consideration the accompanying manuscript. I should be glad to learn whether it

be such as you approve, and would undertake to publish at as early a period as possible. Address, Mr. Currer Bell, under cover to Miss Brontë, Haworth, Bradford, Yorkshire.

CURRER BELL.

Letter 233

TO MESSRS. SMITH, ELDER AND CO.

August 2nd, 1847.

GENTLEMEN,—About three weeks since I sent for your consideration a MS. entitled '*The Professor*, a tale by Currer Bell.' I should be glad to know whether it reached your hands safely, and likewise to learn, at your earliest convenience, whether it be such as you can undertake to publish.—I am, gentlemen, yours respectfully,
CURRER BELL.

I enclose a directed cover for your reply.

The reply when it came was more encouraging than any previous publisher had given. In a 'Biographical Notice' to the second edition of *Wuthering Heights* she says:—

As a forlorn hope he tried one publishing house more. Ere long, in a much shorter space than that on which experience had taught him to calculate, there came a letter, which he opened in the dreary anticipation of finding two hard, hopeless lines, intimating that 'Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co. were not disposed to publish the MS.,' and instead, he took out of the envelope a letter of two pages. He read it trembling. It declined, indeed, to publish that tale for business reasons, but it discussed its merits and demerits so courteously, so considerately, in a spirit so rational, with a discrimination so enlightened, that this very refusal cheered the author better than a vulgarly expressed acceptance would have done. It was added that a work in three volumes would meet with careful attention.

Letter 234

TO MESSRS. SMITH, ELDER AND CO.

August 24th, 1847.

I now send you per rail a MS. entitled *Jane Eyre*, a novel in three volumes, by Currer Bell. I find I cannot prepay the carriage of the parcel, as money for that purpose is not received at the

small station-house where it is left. If, when you acknowledge the receipt of the MS., you would have the goodness to mention the amount charged on delivery, I will immediately transmit it in postage-stamps. It is better in future to address Mr. Currer Bell, under cover to Miss Brontë, Haworth, Bradford, Yorkshire, as there is a risk of letters otherwise directed not reaching me at present. To save trouble, I enclose an envelope.

CURRER BELL.

Jane Eyre appeared on October 16, 1847. Meanwhile Emily's novel *Wuthering Heights* and Anne's novel *Agnes Grey* had been accepted by another publisher, Mr. Thomas Cautley Newby of Mortimer Street. He had demanded money in part payment, and had apparently driven rather a hard bargain with the two unknown writers, Ellis and Acton Bell. Not till *Jane Eyre* had become a success, however, did he issue the two books, taking care to give it out to 'the trade' that Ellis, Acton, and Currer Bell were a single writer.

Jane Eyre was a success from the first. The reviewers were enthusiastic. The second edition of *Jane Eyre*, of which a copy is before me, contains no less than seven pages of 'opinions of the press.' 'Decidedly the best novel of the season,' said the *Westminster Review*, and others were similarly laudatory. Here, however, are further letters which better tell the tale than any paraphrase of them could do. The first is to Mr. William Smith Williams the 'reader' or literary adviser to Smith and Elder, for whom she soon came to feel a strong friendship.

Letter 235

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

October 4th, '47.

DEAR SIR,—I thank you sincerely for your last letter. It is valuable to me because it furnishes me with a sound opinion on points respecting which I desired to be advised; be assured I shall do what I can to profit by your wise and good counsel.

Permit me, however, sir, to caution you against forming too favourable an idea of my powers, or too sanguine an expectation of what they can achieve. I am myself sensible both of deficiencies of capacity and disadvantages of circumstance which will, I fear, render it somewhat difficult for me to attain popularity as an author. The eminent writers you mention—Mr. Thackeray, Mr. Dickens, Mrs. Marsh,[1] etc., doubtless enjoyed facilities for observation such as I have not; certainly they possess a knowledge of the world, whether intuitive or acquired, such as I can lay no claim to, and this gives their writings an importance and a variety greatly beyond what I can offer the public.

Still, if health be spared and time vouchsafed me, I mean to do my best; and should a moderate success crown my efforts, its value will be greatly enhanced by the proof it will seem to give that your kind counsel and encouragement have not been bestowed on one quite unworthy.—Yours respectfully, C. BELL.

Letter 236

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

October 9th, 1847.

DEAR SIR,—I do not know whether the *Dublin University Magazine* is included in the list of periodicals to which Messrs Smith & Elder are accustomed to send copies of new publications, but as a former work, the joint production of myself and my two relatives, Ellis and Acton Bell, received a somewhat favourable notice in that magazine, it appears to me that if the editor's attention were drawn to *Jane Eyre* he might possibly bestow on it also a few words of remark.

The *Critic* and the *Athenæum* also gave comments on the work I allude to. The review in the first-mentioned paper was unexpectedly and generously eulogistic, that in the *Athenæum* more qualified, but still not discouraging. I mention these circumstances and leave it to you to judge whether any advantage is derivable from them.

You dispensed me from the duty of answering your last letter,

[1] Anne Marsh (1791-1874), a daughter of James Caldwell, J.P., of Linley Wood, Staffordshire, married a son of the senior partner in the London banking firm of Marsh, Stacey, and Graham. Her first volume appeared in 1834, and contained, under the title of *Two Old Men's Tales*, two stories, *The Admiral's Daughter* and *The Deformed*, which won considerable popularity. *Emilia Wyndham*, *Time the Avenger*, *Mount Sorel*, and *Castle Avon*, are perhaps the best of her many subsequent novels.

but my sense of the justness of the views it expresses will not permit me to neglect this opportunity both of acknowledging it and thanking you for it.—Yours sincerely, C. BELL.

Letter 237

TO MESSRS. SMITH, ELDER AND CO.

October 19*th*, 1847.

GENTLEMEN,—The six copies of *Jane Eyre* reached me this morning. You have given the work every advantage which good paper, clear type, and a seemly outside can supply; if it fails the fault will lie with the author; you are exempt.

I now await the judgment of the press and the public.—I am gentlemen, yours respectfully, C. BELL.

Letter 238

TO MESSRS. SMITH, ELDER AND CO.

October 26*th*, 1847.

GENTLEMEN,—I have received the newspapers. They speak quite as favourably of *Jane Eyre* as I expected them to do. The notice in the *Literary Gazette* seems certainly to have been indited in rather a flat mood, and the *Athenæum* has a style of its own, which I respect, but cannot exactly relish; still, when one considers that journals of that standing have a dignity to maintain which would be deranged by a too cordial recognition of the claims of an obscure author, I suppose there is every reason to be satisfied.

Meantime a brisk sale would be effectual support under the *hauteur* of lofty critics.—I am, gentlemen, yours respectfully,

C. BELL.

Letter 239

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

HAWORTH, *October* 28*th*, 1847.

DEAR SIR,—Your last letter was very pleasant to me to read, and is very cheering to reflect on. I feel honoured in being approved by Mr. Thackeray, because I approve Mr. Thackeray. This may sound presumptuous perhaps, but I mean that I have long recognised in his writings genuine talent, such as I admired,

such as I wondered at and delighted in. No author seems to distinguish so exquisitely as he does dross from ore, the real from the counferfeit. I believed too he had deep and true feelings under his seeming sternness. Now I am sure he has. One good word from such a man is worth pages of praise from ordinary judges.

You are right in having faith in the reality of Helen Burns's character; she was real enough. I have exaggerated nothing there. I abstained from recording much that I remember respecting her, lest the narrative should sound incredible. Knowing this, I could not but smile at the quiet self-complacent dogmatism with which one of the journals lays it down that 'such creations as Helen Burns are very beautiful but very untrue.'

The plot of *Jane Eyre* may be a hackneyed one. Mr. Thackeray remarks that it is familiar to him. But having read comparatively few novels I never chanced to meet with it, and I thought it original. The work referred to by the critic of the *Athenæum* I had not the good fortune to hear of.

The *Weekly Chronicle* seems inclined to identify me with Mrs. Marsh. I never had the pleasure of perusing a line of Mrs. Marsh's in my life, but I wish very much to read her works, and shall profit by the first opportunity of doing so. I hope I shall not find I have been an unconscious imitator.

I would still endeavour to keep my expectations low respecting the ultimate success of *Jane Eyre*. But my desire that it should succeed augments, for you have taken much trouble about the work, and it would grieve me seriously if your active efforts should be baffled and your sanguine hopes disappointed. Excuse me if I again remark that I fear they are rather *too* sanguine: it would be better to moderate them. What will the critics of the monthly reviews and magazines be likely to see in *Jane Eyre* (if indeed they deign to read it), which will win from them even a stinted modicum of approbation? It has no learning, no research, it discusses no subject of public interest. A mere domestic novel will, I fear, seem trivial to men of large views and solid attainments.

Still, efforts so energetic and indefatigable as yours ought to realise a result in some degree favourable, and I trust they will.—I remain, dear sir, yours respectfully, C. BELL.

I have just received the *Tablet* and the *Morning Advertiser*. Neither paper seems inimical to the book, but I see it produces a

very different effect on different natures. I was amused at the analysis in the *Tablet*, it is oddly expressed in some parts. I think the critic did not always seize my meaning; he speaks, for instance, of 'Jane's inconceivable alarm at Mr. Rochester's repelling manner.' I do not remember that.

Letter 240

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

November 6th, 1847.

DEAR SIR,—I should be obliged to you if you will direct the enclosed to be posted in London as I wish to avoid giving any clue to my place of residence, publicity not being my ambition.

It is an answer to the letter I received yesterday, favoured by you. This letter bore the signature G. H. Lewes, and the writer informs me that it is his intention to write a critique on *Jane Eyre* for the December number of *Fraser's Magazine*, and possibly also, he intimates, a brief notice to the *Westminster Review*. Upon the whole he seems favourably inclined to the work, though he hints disapprobation of the melodramatic portions.

Can you give me any information respecting Mr. Lewes? what station he occupies in the literary world and what works he has written? He styles himself 'a fellow novelist.' There is something in the candid tone of his letter which inclines me to think well of him.

I duly received your letter containing the notices from the *Critic*, and the two magazines, and also the *Morning Post*. I hope all these notices will work together for good; they must at any rate give the book a certain publicity.—Yours sincerely,

C. BELL.

The literary lights of London began now to shed their beams. George Henry Lewes was one of the first. He wrote thus to Mrs. Gaskell:—

When *Jane Eyre* first appeared, the publishers courteously sent me a copy. The enthusiasm with which I read it made me go down to Mr. Parker, and propose to write a review of it for *Fraser's Magazine*. He would not consent to an unknown novel—for the papers had not yet declared themselves—receiving such importance, but thought it might make one on 'Recent Novels: English and French,' which appeared in *Fraser*, December 1847.

Meanwhile I had written to Miss Brontë to tell her the delight with which her book filled me; and seem to have 'sermonised' her, to judge from her reply.

Letter 241

TO G. H. LEWES

November 6th, 1847.

DEAR SIR,—Your letter reached me yesterday. I beg to assure you that I appreciate fully the intention with which it was written, and I thank you sincerely both for its cheering commendation and valuable advice.

You warn me to beware of melodrama, and you exhort me to adhere to the real. When I first began to write, so impressed was I with the truth of the principles you advocate, that I determined to take Nature and Truth as my sole guides, and to follow to their very footprints; I restrained imagination, eschewed romance, repressed excitement; over-bright colouring, too, I avoided, and sought to produce something which should be soft, grave, and true.

My work (a tale in one volume) being completed, I offered it to a publisher. He said it was original, faithful to nature, but he did not feel warranted in accepting it; such a work would not sell. I tried six publishers in succession; they all told me it was deficient in 'startling incident' and 'thrilling excitement,' that it would never suit the circulating libraries, and as it was on those libraries the success of works of fiction mainly depended, they could not undertake to publish what would be overlooked there.

Jane Eyre was rather objected to at first, on the same grounds, but finally found acceptance.

I mention this to you, not with a view of pleading exemption from censure, but in order to direct your attention to the root of certain literary evils. If, in your forthcoming article in *Fraser*, you would bestow a few words of enlightenment on the public who support the circulating libraries, you might, with your powers, do some good.

You advise me, too, not to stray far from the ground of experience, as I become weak when I enter the region of fiction; and you say 'real experience is perennially interesting, and to all men.'

I feel that this also is true; but, dear sir, is not the real experience of each individual very limited? And, if a writer dwells upon that solely or principally, is he not in danger of repeating himself,

and also of becoming an egotist? Then, too, imagination is a strong, restless faculty, which claims to be heard and exercised: are we to be quite deaf to her cry, and insensate to her struggles? When she shows us bright pictures, are we never to look at them, and try to reproduce them? And when she is eloquent, and speaks rapidly and urgently in our ear, are we not to write to her dictation?

I shall anxiously search the next number of *Fraser* for your opinions on these points.—Believe me, dear sir, yours gratefully,

C. BELL.

Letter 242

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

November 10th, 1847.

DEAR SIR,—I have received the *Britannia* and the *Sun*, but not the *Spectator*, which I rather regret, as censure, though not pleasant, is often wholesome.

Thank you for your information regarding Mr. Lewes. I am glad to hear that he is a clever and sincere man: such being the case, I can await his critical sentence with fortitude; even if it goes against me I shall not murmur; ability and honesty have a right to condemn, where they think condemnation is deserved. From what you say, however, I trust rather to obtain at least a modified approval.

Your account of the various surmises respecting the identity of the brothers Bell amused me much: were the enigma solved it would probably be found not worth the trouble of solution; but I will let it alone: it suits ourselves to remain quiet, and certainly injures no one else.

The reviewer who noticed the little book of poems, in the *Dublin Magazine*, conjectured that the *soi-disant* three personages were in reality but one, who, endowed with an unduly prominent organ of self-esteem, and consequently impressed with a somewhat weighty notion of his own merits, thought them too vast to be concentrated in a single individual, and accordingly divided himself into three, out of consideration, I suppose, for the nerves of the much-to-be-astounded public! This was an ingenious thought in the reviewer—very original and striking, but not accurate. We are three.

A prose work, by Ellis and Acton, will soon appear: it should have been out, indeed, long since; for the first proof-sheets were

already in the press at the commencement of last August, before Currer Bell had placed the MS. of *Jane Eyre* in your hands. Mr. Newby, however, does not do business like Messrs. Smith & Elder; a different spirit seems to preside at Mortimer Street to that which guides the helm at 65 Cornhill. . . . My relations have suffered from exhausting delay and procrastination, while I have to acknowledge the benefits of a management at once businesslike and gentlemanlike, energetic and considerate.

I should like to know if Mr. Newby often acts as he has done to my relations, or whether this is an exceptional instance of his method. Do you know, and can you tell me anything about him? You must excuse me for going to the point at once, when I want to learn anything; if my questions are impertinent you are, of course, at liberty to decline answering them.—I am yours respectfully, C. BELL.

Letter 243

TO MESSRS. SMITH, ELDER AND CO.

November 13th, 1847.

GENTLEMEN,—I have to acknowledge the receipt of yours of the 11th inst., and to thank you for the information it communicates. The notice from the *People's Journal* also duly reached me, and this morning I received the *Spectator*. The critique in the *Spectator* gives that view of the book which will naturally be taken by a certain class of minds; I shall expect it to be followed by other notices of a similar nature. The way to detraction has been pointed out, and will probably be pursued. Most future notices will in all likelihood have a reflection of the *Spectator* in them. I fear this turn of opinion will not improve the demand for the book—but time will show. If *Jane Eyre* has any solid worth in it, it ought to weather a gust of unfavourable wind.—I am, gentlemen, yours respectfully, C. BELL.

Letter 244

TO G. H. LEWES

November 22nd, 1847.

DEAR SIR,—I have now read *Ranthorpe*. I could not get it till a day or two ago; but I have got it and read it at last; and in

reading *Ranthorpe* I have read a new book—not a reprint—not a reflection of any other book, but a *new book*.

I did not know such books were written now. It is very different to any of the popular works of fiction; it fills the mind with fresh knowledge. Your experience and your convictions are made the reader's; and to an author, at least, they have a value and an interest quite unusual. I await your criticism on *Jane Eyre* now with other sentiments than I entertained before the perusal of *Ranthorpe*.

You were a stranger to me. I did not particularly respect you. I did not feel that your praise or blame would have any special weight. I knew little of your right to condemn or approve. *Now* I am informed on these points.

You will be severe; your last letter taught me as much. Well! I shall try to extract good out of your severity; and besides, though I am now sure you are a just, discriminating man, yet being mortal, you must be fallible; and if any part of your censure galls me too keenly to the quick—gives me deadly pain—I shall for the present disbelieve it, and put it quite aside, till such time as I feel able to receive it without torture.—I am, dear sir, yours very respectfully, C. BELL.

Letter 245

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

November 27th, 1847.

DEAR SIR,—Will you have the goodness in future to direct all communications to me to Haworth, near *Keighley*, instead of to *Bradford*? With this address they will, owing to alterations in local post-office arrangements, reach me a day earlier than if sent by Bradford. I have received this week the *Glasgow Examiner* the *Bath Herald*, and *Douglas Jerrold's Newspaper*. The *Examiner*, it appears, has not yet given a notice.—I am, dear sir, yours respectfully, C. BELL.

Letter 246

TO MESSRS. SMITH, ELDER AND CO.

November 30th, 1847.

GENTLEMEN,—I have received the *Economist*, but not the *Examiner*; from some cause that paper has missed, as the

Spectator did on a former occasion; I am glad, however, to learn through your letter that its notice of *Jane Eyre* was favourable, and also that the prospects of the work appear to improve.

I am obliged to you for the information respecting *Wuthering Heights.*—I am, gentlemen, yours respectfully, C. BELL.

Letter 247

TO MESSRS. SMITH, ELDER AND CO.

December 1*st*, 1847.

GENTLEMEN,—The *Examiner* reached me to-day: it had been missent on account of the direction, which was to Currer Bell, care of Miss Brontë. Allow me to intimate that it would be better in future not to put the name of Currer Bell on the outside of communications; if directed simply to Miss Brontë they will be more likely to reach their destination safely. Currer Bell is not known in the district, and I have no wish that he should become known. The notice in the *Examiner* gratified me very much; it appears to be from the pen of an able man who has understood what he undertakes to criticise; of course approbation from such a quarter is encouraging to an author, and I trust it will prove beneficial to the work.—I am, gentlemen, yours respectfully, C. BELL.

I received likewise seven other notices from provincial papers enclosed in an envelope. I thank you very sincerely for so punctually sending me all the various criticisms on *Jane Eyre.*

Letter 248

TO MESSRS. SMITH, ELDER AND CO.

December 10*th*, 1847.

GENTLEMEN,—I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter enclosing a bank post bill, for which I thank you. Having already expressed my sense of your kind and upright conduct, I can now only say that I trust you will always have reason to be as well content with me as I am with you. If the result of any future exertions I may be able to make should prove agreeable and advantageous to you, I shall be well satisfied; and it would be a serious source of regret to me if I thought you ever had reason to repent being my publishers.

You need not apologise, gentlemen, for having written to me so seldom; of course I am always glad to hear from you, but I am

truly glad to hear from Mr. Williams likewise; he was my first favourable critic; he first gave me encouragement to persevere as an author, consequently I naturally respect him and feel grateful to him.

Excuse the informality of my letter, and believe me, gentlemen, yours respectfully, CURRER BELL.

Meanwhile we must not forget Miss Ellen Nussey. That the letters to her friend during the last three months of this memorable year were not numerous is not surprising. So much energy must have gone into the new correspondence with Cornhill. But a visit to Brookroyd which took place while the pages of *Jane Eyre* were being passed for press, and her friend's visit to Haworth, partially account for the fact that there are but few letters of this period.

Letter 249

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

November 29th, '47.

DEAR ELLEN,—The old pang of fearing you should fancy I forget you drives me to write to you, though heaven knows I have precious little to say, and if it were not that I wish to hear from you, and hate to appear disregardful when I am not so, I might let another week or perhaps two slip away without writing. R. Robinson's letter, as you say, does her credit. There is a pleasing simplicity and absence of affectation in the style. There is much in R.'s letter that I thought very melancholy. Poor girls! theirs, I fear, must be a very unhappy home. Yours and mine, with all disadvantages, all absences of luxury and wealth and style, are I doubt not, happier. I wish to goodness you were rich that you might give Miss —— a temporary asylum, and a relief from uneasiness, suffering and gloom. What you say about the effects of ether on C. S. rather startled me. I had always consoled myself with the idea of having some teeth extracted some day under its soothing influence, but now I should think twice before I consented to inhale it; one would not like to make a fool of oneself. When you write again, and let it be soon, don't forget to give me a bulletin of R.'s health.—I am, yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

Letter 250

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

Thursday.

DEAR ELLEN,—I shall expect you on Saturday, and have ordered a gig to meet you at Keighley Station at 3½ past. Don't disappoint me if you can possibly help it. I am very sorry to hear your mother is not so well, but trust she will be better. Give her my love. Mercy is tiresome. At Haworth you will have rest and repose at any rate. I truly long to see you, C. B.

Letter 251

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

December —, 1847.

DEAR ELLEN,—It was high time you wrote; I should soon have begun to think something was wrong if you had delayed much longer.

I am glad Miss Ringrose has returned with you, both for her sake and yours; still, with two visitors in the house you must have plenty to do. It is really most desirable to be able to provide attendance on such occasions without having constantly to deprive oneself of the pleasure of one's guests' company.

People who can afford servants—who can comfortably trust the preparation of meals to the superintendence of a cook—enjoy a very great privilege under such circumstances.

I have no patience with either your brother John or the Duke of Devonshire. In the first place, what an illogical ass the Duke must be to make one brother responsible for the acts of another—to cut John because Henry had made what seems to me a not unreasonable demand—that of compensation for improvements on a living in the Duke's gift!

In the second place, what earthly business had John to write his mother and sisters an unpleasant letter on the subject? What right had he to annoy them? I intensely dislike some of his conduct to the female members of his family—it is unjust, it is coldly tyrannous. His brothers wrong him and annoy him? It is possible; but why mix up his sisters, his mother, with conduct in which they had no share—why lavish his revenge on them?

I should think Rosy Ringrose, from what you say, must be a

very attractive personage to the 'worthier sex' as some say, or the 'coarser sex' as others phrase it—much more so probably than her sister, though for sterling worth Amelia no doubt bears away the palm. A pretty Martha Taylor (for Martha, though piquant, was not pretty) must be a very charming creature indeed. I had a letter from Mary Taylor last week—short and without one word of news in it, except that she was in better health and spirits than she had usually enjoyed in Europe. She asks after you.

I wish all Brookroyd a happy Christmas and to yourself double good wishes. C. BRONTË.

Letter 252

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

December 11th, 1847.

DEAR SIR,—I have delayed writing to you in the hope that the parcel you sent would reach me; but after making due inquiries at the Keighley, Bradford, and Leeds Stations and obtaining no news of it, I must conclude that it has been lost.

However, I have contrived to get a sight of *Fraser's Magazine* from another quarter, so that I have only to regret Mr. Horne's kind present. Will you thank that gentleman for me when you see him, and tell him that the railroad is to blame for my not having acknowledged his courtesy before?

Mr. Lewes is very lenient: I anticipated a degree of severity which he has spared me. This notice differs from all the other notices. He must be a man of no ordinary mind: there is a strange sagacity evinced in some of his remarks: yet he is not always right. I am afraid if he knew how much I write from intuition, how little from actual knowledge, he would think me presumptuous ever to have written at all. I am sure such would be his opinion if he knew the narrow bounds of my attainments, the limited scope of my reading.

There are moments when I can hardly credit that anything I have done should be found worthy to give even transitory pleasure to such men as Mr. Thackeray, Sir John Herschel, Mr. Fonblanque, Leigh Hunt, and Mr. Lewes—that my humble efforts should have had such a result is a noble reward.

I was glad and proud to get the bank bill Mr. Smith sent me yesterday, but I hardly ever felt delight equal to that which

cheered me when I received your letter containing an extract from a note by Mr. Thackeray, in which he expressed himself gratified with the perusal of *Jane Eyre.* Mr. Thackeray is a keen, ruthless satirist. I had never perused his writings but with blended feelings of admiration and indignation. Critics, it appears to me, do not know what an intellectual boa-constrictor he is. They call him 'humorous,' 'brilliant'—his is a most scalping humour, a most deadly brilliancy: he does not play with his prey, he coils round it and crushes it in his rings. He seems terribly in earnest in his war against the falsehood and follies of 'the world.' I often wonder what that 'world' thinks of him. I should think the faults of such a man would be distrust of anything good in human nature—galling suspicion of bad motives lurking behind good actions. Are these his failings?

They are, at any rate, the failings of his written sentiments, for he cannot find in his heart to represent either man or woman as at once good and wise. Does he not too much confound benevolence with weakness and wisdom with mere craft?

But I must not intrude on your time by too long a letter.—Believe me, yours respectfully, C. BELL.

Letter 253

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

HAWORTH, *December* 13*th*, 1847.

DEAR SIR,—Your advice merits and shall have my most serious attention. I feel the force of your reasoning. It is my wish to do my best in the career on which I have entered. So I shall study and strive; and by dint of time, thought, and effort, I hope yet to deserve in part the encouragement you and others have so generously accorded me. But *time* will be necessary—that I feel more than ever. In case of *Jane Eyre* reaching a second edition, I should wish some few corrections to be made, and will prepare an errata. How would the accompanying preface do? I thought it better to be brief.

The *Observer* has just reached me. I always compel myself to read the analysis in every newspaper-notice. It is a just punishment, a due though severe humiliation for faults of plan and construction. I wonder if the analyses of other fictions read as absurdly as that of *Jane Eyre* always does.—I am, dear sir, yours respectfully, C. BELL.

Letter 254

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

December 14th, 1847.

DEAR SIR,—I have just received your kind and welcome letter of the 11th. I shall proceed at once to discuss the principal subject of it.

Of course a second work has occupied my thoughts much. I think it would be premature in me to undertake a serial now—I am not yet qualified for the task: I have neither gained a sufficiently firm footing with the public, nor do I possess sufficient confidence in myself, nor can I boast those unflagging animal spirits, that even command of the faculty of composition, which as you say, and, I am persuaded, most justly, is an indispensable requisite to success in serial literature. I decidedly feel that ere I change my ground I had better make another venture in the three-volume novel form.

Respecting the plan of such a work, I have pondered it, but as yet with very unsatisfactory results. Three commencements have I essayed, but all three displease me. A few days since I looked over *The Professor*. I found the beginning very feeble, the whole narrative deficient in incident and in general attractiveness. Yet the middle and latter portion of the work, all that relates to Brussels, the Belgian school, etc., is as good as I can write: it contains more pith, more substance, more reality, in my judgment, than much of *Jane Eyre*. It gives, I think, a new view of a grade, an occupation, and a class of characters—all very commonplace, very insignificant in themselves, but not more so than the materials composing that portion of *Jane Eyre* which seems to please most generally.

My wish is to recast *The Professor*, add as well as I can what is deficient, retrench some parts, develop others, and make of it a three-volume work—no easy task, I know, yet I trust not an impracticable one.

I have not forgotten that *The Professor* was set aside in my agreement with Messrs. Smith & Elder; therefore before I take any step to execute the plan I have sketched, I should wish to have your judgment on its wisdom. You read or looked over the MS.—what impression have you now respecting its worth? and what confidence have you that I can make it better than it is?

Feeling certain that from business reasons as well as from

natural integrity you will be quite candid with me, I esteem it a privilege to be able thus to consult you.—Believe me, dear sir, yours respectfully,
C. BELL.

Wuthering Heights is, I suppose, at length published, at least Mr. Newby has sent the authors their six copies. I wonder how it will be received. I should say it merits the epithets of 'vigorous' and 'original' much more decidedly than *Jane Eyre* did. *Agnes Grey* should please such critics as Mr. Lewes, for it is 'true' and 'unexaggerated' enough. The books are not well got up—they abound in errors of the press. On a former occasion I expressed myself with perhaps too little reserve regarding Mr. Newby, yet I cannot but feel, and feel painfully, that Ellis and Acton have not had the justice at his hands that I have had at those of Messrs. Smith & Elder.

Mr. R. H. Horne[1] sent her his *Orion.*

Letter 255

TO R. H. HORNE

December 15*th*, 1847.

DEAR SIR,—You will have thought me strangely tardy in acknowledging your courteous present, but the fact is it never reached me till yesterday; the parcel containing it was missent —consequently it lingered a fortnight on its route.

I have to thank you, not merely for the gift of a little book of 137 pages, but for that of a *poem*. Very real, very sweet is the poetry of *Orion*; there are passages I shall recur to again and yet again—passages instinct both with power and beauty. All through it is genuine—pure from one flaw of affectation, rich in noble imagery. How far the applause of critics has rewarded the author of *Orion* I do not know, but I think the pleasure he enjoyed in its composition must have been a bounteous meed in itself. You could not, I imagine, have written that epic without at times deriving deep happiness from your work.

With sincere thanks for the pleasure its perusal has afforded me,—I remain, dear sir, yours faithfully,
C. BELL.

[1] Richard Hengist Horne (1803-1884). Published *Cosmo de Medici*, 1837; *Orion*, an epic poem in ten books, passed through six editions in 1843, the first three editions being issued at a farthing; *A New Spirit of the Age*, 1844; *Letters of E. B. Browning to R. H. Horne*, 1877.

Letter 256

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

HAWORTH, *December* 15*th*, 1847.

DEAR SIR,—I write a line in haste to apprise you that I have got the parcel. It was sent, through the carelessness of the railroad people, to Bingley, where it lay a fortnight, till a Haworth carrier happening to pass that way brought it on to me.

I was much pleased to find that you had been kind enough to forward the *Mirror* along with *Fraser*. The article on 'the last new novel' is in substance similar to the notice in the *Sunday Times*. One passage only excited much interest in me; it was that where allusion is made to some former work which the author of *Jane Eyre* is supposed to have published—there, I own, my curiosity was a little stimulated. The reviewer cannot mean the little book of rhymes to which Currer Bell contributed a third; but as that, and *Jane Eyre*, and a brief translation of some French verses sent anonymously to a magazine, are the sole productions of mine that have ever appeared in print, I am puzzled to know to what else he can refer.

The reviewer is mistaken, as he is in perverting my meaning, in attributing to me designs I know not, principles I disown.

I have been greatly pleased with Mr. R. H. Horne's poem of *Orion*. Will you have the kindness to forward to him the enclosed note, and to correct the address if it is not accurate?—Believe me, dear sir, yours respectfully, C. BELL.

Letter 257

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

December 21*st*, 1847.

DEAR SIR,—I am, for my own part, dissatisfied with the preface I sent—I fear it savours of flippancy. If you see no objection I should prefer substituting the enclosed. It is rather more lengthy, but it expresses something I have long wished to express.

Mr. Smith is kind indeed to think of sending me *The Jar of Honey*. When I receive the book I will write to him. I cannot thank you sufficiently for your letters, and I can give you but a faint idea of the pleasure they afford me; they seem to introduce

such light and life to the torpid retirement where we live like dormice. But, understand this distinctly, you must never write to me except when you have both leisure and inclination. I know your time is too fully occupied and too valuable to be often at the service of any one individual.

You are not far wrong in your judgment respecting *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*. Ellis has a strong, original mind, full of strange though sombre power. When he writes poetry that power speaks in language at once condensed, elaborated, and refined, but in prose it breaks forth in scenes which shock more than they attract. Ellis will improve, however, because he knows his defects. *Agnes Grey* is the mirror of the mind of the writer. The orthography and punctuation of the books are mortifying to a degree: almost all the errors that were corrected in the proof-sheets appear intact in what should have been the fair copies. If Mr. Newby always does business in this way, few authors would like to have him for their publisher a second time.—Believe me, dear sir, yours respectfully, C. BELL.

Letter 258

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

HAWORTH, *December 23rd*, 1847.

DEAR SIR,—I am glad that you and Messrs. Smith & Elder approve the second preface.

I send an errata of the first volume, and part of the second. I will send the rest of the corrections as soon as possible.

Will the enclosed dedication suffice? I have made it brief, because I wished to avoid any appearance of pomposity or pretension.

The notice in the *Church of England Journal* gratified me much, and chiefly because it *was* the *Church of England Journal*. Whatever such critics as he of the *Mirror* may say, I love the Church of England. Her ministers, indeed, I do not regard as infallible personages. I have seen too much of them for that, but to the Establishment, with all her faults—the profane Athanasian creed *ex*cluded—I am sincerely attached.

Is the forthcoming critique on Mr. Thackeray's writings in the *Edinburgh Review* written by Mr. Lewes? I hope it is. Mr. Lewes, with his penetrating sagacity and fine acumen, ought to be able to do the author of *Vanity Fair* justice. Only he must

not bring him down to the level of Fielding—he is far, far above Fielding. It appears to me that Fielding's style is arid, and his views of life and human nature coarse, compared with Thackeray's.

With many thanks for your kind wishes, and a cordial reciprocation of them,—I remain, dear sir, yours respectfully,

C. BELL.

On glancing over this scrawl, I find it so illegibly written that I fear you will hardly be able to decipher it; but the cold is partly to blame for this—my fingers are numb.

Letter 259

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

December 31st, 1847.

DEAR SIR,—I think, for the reasons you mention, it is better to substitute *author* for *editor*. I should not be ashamed to be considered the author of *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*, but, possessing no real claim to that honour, I would rather not have it attributed to me, thereby depriving the true authors of their just meed.[1]

You do very rightly and very kindly to tell me the objections

[1] A cutting from *The Atlas* newspaper was found among others in Emily Brontë's desk. Here is the opening of its review of *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*:—

'About two years ago a small volume of poems by "Currer, Acton, and Ellis" Bell was given to the world. The poems were of varying excellence; those by Currer Bell, for the most part, exhibiting the highest order of merit; but, as a whole, the little work produced little or no sensation, and was speedily forgotten. Currer, Acton, and Ellis Bell have now all come before us as novelists, and all with so much success as to make their future career a matter of interesting speculation in the literary world.

'Whether, as there is little reason to believe, the names which we have written are the genuine names of actual personages—whether they are, on the other hand, mere publishing names, as is our own private conviction—whether they represent three distinct individuals, or whether a single personage is the actual representative of the 'three gentlemen at once' of the title-pages—whether the authorship of the poems and the novels is to be assigned to one gentleman or one lady, to three gentlemen or three ladies, or to a mixed male and female triad of authors—are questions over which the curious may puzzle themselves, but are matters really of little account. One thing is certain; as in the poems, so in the novels, the signature of "Currer Bell" is attached to pre-eminently the best performance. We were the first to welcome the author of *Jane Eyre* as a new writer of no ordinary power. A new edition of that singular work has been called for, and we do not doubt that its success has done much to ensure a favourable reception for the volumes which are now before us.'

made against *Jane Eyre*—they are more essential than the praises. I feel a sort of heart-ache when I hear the book called 'godless' and 'pernicious' by good and earnest-minded men; but I know that heart-ache will be salutary—at least I trust so.

What is meant by the charges of *trickery* and *artifice* I have yet to comprehend. It was no art in me to write a tale—it was no trick in Messrs. Smith & Elder to publish it. Where do the trickery and artifice lie?

I have received the *Scotsman*, and was greatly amused to see Jane Eyre likened to Rebecca Sharp—the resemblance would hardly have occurred to me.

I wish to send this note by to-day's post, and must therefore conclude in haste.—I am, dear sir, yours respectfully,

C. BELL.

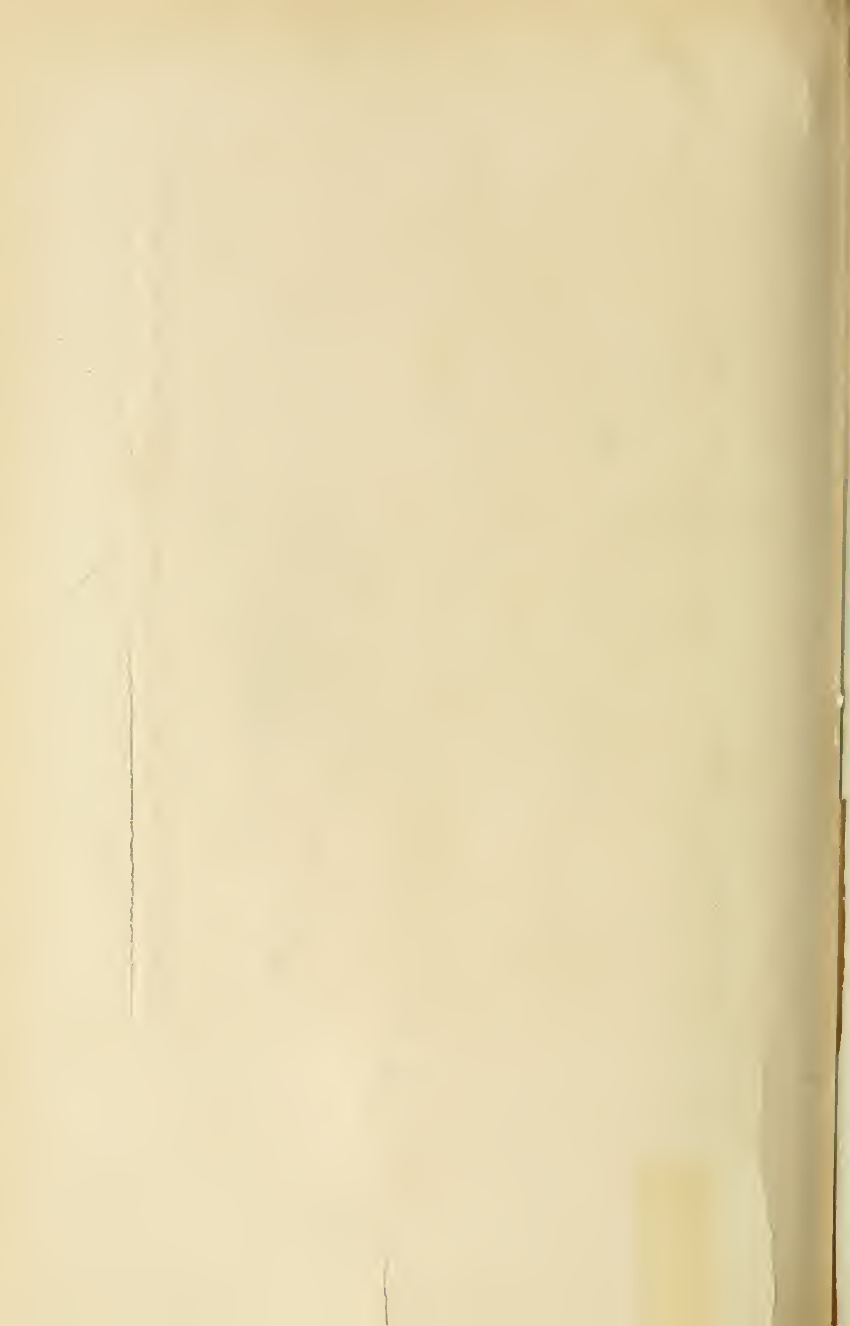
CHAPTER XVI

A LITERARY FRIENDSHIP

It is at this point that the letters of Charlotte Brontë become profoundly interesting. Hers was a courageous, independent nature, and she delighted at all times to say what she thought about men and things. It was not until she came into contact with London literary life that real opportunity was afforded her of a direct expression of her outlook. If the letters to M. Héger had not been destroyed we should doubtless have found in them the beginnings of that disposition to fearless opinion upon books and men in which M. Héger encouraged his pupil. The letters we have read so far—those written before *Jane Eyre* was published—have been addressed for the most part to her friend Ellen Nussey. Miss Nussey was a kindly, amiable girl whom those who knew her as a woman will recall with reverence as devout, hero-worshipping, but of no strong intellectual or critical capacity. She was one of thousands of estimable churchwomen who place the portraits of the bishop of the diocese and their parish priest upon their mantelpiece, and whose life in the main centres round their Church. We have from Charlotte in a later letter to Mr. Williams a quite frank analysis of her friend's nature. Henceforth she is to live in a wider world, and the attraction of her letters increases accordingly. Mr. William Smith Williams, her principal correspondent, was in many ways a remarkable man.

Charlotte has emphasised the fact that she adapted herself to her correspondents, and in her letters to Mr. Williams we have her at her very best. Mr.

William Smith Williams Esq.
after a photograph by his son Richard Smith Williams



Williams occupied for many years the post of 'reader' in the firm of Smith & Elder. That is a position scarcely less honourable and important than authorship itself. In our own days Mr. George Meredith and Viscount Morley have been 'readers,' and Mr. James Payn once held the same post in the firm which published the Brontë novels.

Mr. Williams, who was born in 1800, and died in 1875, had an interesting career even before he became associated with Smith & Elder. In his younger days he was apprenticed to Taylor & Hessey of Fleet Street; and he used to relate how his boyish ideals of Coleridge were shattered on beholding, for the first time, the bulky and ponderous figure of the great talker. When Keats left England, for an early grave in Rome, it was Mr. Williams who saw him off. Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt, and many other well-known men of letters were friendly with Mr. Williams from his earliest days, and he had for brother-in-law, Wells, the author of *Joseph and his Brethren*. In his association with Smith & Elder he secured the friendship of Thackeray, of Mrs. Gaskell, and of many other writers. Some of Mrs. Gaskell's letters to him are in my possession. He attracted the notice of Ruskin by a keen enthusiasm for the work of Turner. It was he, in fact, who compiled that most interesting volume of *Selections from the Writings of John Ruskin*, which has long gone out of print in its first form, but is still greatly sought for by the curious.[1]

[1] In connection with this volume I may print here a letter written by John Ruskin's father to Mr. Williams.

DENMARK HILL, *November 25th*, 1861.

MY DEAR SIR,—I am requested by Mrs. Ruskin to return her very sincere and grateful thanks for your kind consideration in presenting her with so beautifully bound a copy of the *Selections* from her son's writings; and which she will have great pleasure in seeing by the side of the very magnificent volumes which the liberality of the gentlemen of your house has already enriched our library with.

Mrs. Ruskin joins me in offering congratulations on the great judgment you have displayed in your *Selections*, and, sending my own thanks and those of my son for the handsome gift to Mrs. Ruskin,—I am, my dear sir, yours very truly,

JOHN JAMES RUSKIN.

What Charlotte Brontë thought of Mr. Williams is sufficiently revealed by the multitude of letters which I have the good fortune to print, and that she had a reason to be grateful to him is obvious when we recollect that to him, and to him alone, was due her first recognition. The parcel containing *The Professor* had, as we have seen, wandered from publisher to publisher before it came into the hands of Mr. Williams. It was he who recognised what all of us recognise now, that in spite of faults it is really a most considerable book. I am inclined to think that it was refused by Smith & Elder rather on account of its insufficient length than for any other cause. At any rate it was the length which was assigned to her as a reason for non-acceptance. She was told that another book, which would make the accredited three-volume novel, might receive more favourable consideration.

Charlotte Brontë took Mr. Williams's advice. She had already written *Jane Eyre*, and she despatched it quickly to Smith & Elder's house in Cornhill. It was read by Mr. Williams, and read afterwards by Mr. George Smith; and it was published with the success that we know. Charlotte awoke to find herself famous. She began a regular correspondence with Mr. Williams, and not less than a hundred letters were sent to him, most of them treating of interesting literary matters.

One of Mr. Williams's daughters, I may add, married Mr. Lowes Dickinson the portrait-painter; his youngest child, a baby when Miss Brontë was alive, is famous in the musical world as Miss Anna Williams. The family has an abundance of literary and artistic association, but the father we know as the friend and correspondent of Charlotte Brontë. He still lives also in the memory of a large circle as a kindly and attractive—a singularly good and upright man.

In printing a succession of these letters I am compelled,

in my desire for chronological sequence, to interleave them with her still regular correspondence with Ellen Nussey and letters to other friends.

Letter 260

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

HAWORTH, *January 4th*, 1848.

DEAR SIR,—Your letter made me ashamed of myself that I should ever have uttered a murmur, or expressed by any sign that I was sensible of pain from the unfavourable opinions of some misjudging but well-meaning people. But, indeed, let me assure you, I am not ungrateful for the kindness which has been given me in such abundant measure. I can discriminate the proportions in which blame and praise have been awarded to my efforts: I see well that I have had less of the former and more of the latter than I merit. I am not therefore crushed, though I may be momentarily saddened by the frown, even of the good.

It would take a good deal to crush me, because I know, in the first place, that my own intentions were correct, that I feel in my heart a deep reverence for religion, that impiety is very abhorrent to me; and in the second, I place firm reliance on the judgment of some who have encouraged me. You and Mr. Lewes are quite as good authorities, in my estimation, as Mr. Dilke or the editor of the *Spectator*, and I would not under any circumstances, or for any opprobrium, regard with shame what my friends had approved —none but a coward would let the detraction of an enemy outweigh the encouragement of a friend. You must not, therefore, fulfil your threat of being less communicative in future; you must kindly tell me all.

Miss Kavanagh's view of the maniac coincides with Leigh Hunt's. I agree with them that the character is shocking, but I know that it is but too natural. There is a phase of insanity which may be called moral madness, in which all that is good or even human seems to disappear from the mind, and a fiend-nature replaces it. The sole aim and desire of the being thus possessed is to exasperate, to molest, to destroy, and preternatural ingenuity and energy are often exercised to that dreadful end. The aspect, in such cases, assimilates with the disposition—all seem demonised. It is true that profound pity ought to be the only sentiment elicited by the view of such degradation, and equally true is

it that I have not sufficiently dwelt on that feeling: I have erred in making *horror* too predominant. Mrs. Rochester, indeed, lived a sinful life before she was insane, but sin is itself a species of insanity—the truly good behold and compassionate it as such.

Jane Eyre has got down into Yorkshire, a copy has even penetrated into this neighbourhood. I saw an elderly clergyman reading it the other day, and had the satisfaction of hearing him exclaim, 'Why, they have got —— School, and Mr. —— here, I declare! and Miss ——' (naming the originals of Lowood, Mr. Brocklehurst and Miss Temple). He had known them all. I wondered whether he would recognise the portraits, and was gratified to find that he did, and that, moreover, he pronounced them faithful and just. He said, too, that Mr. —— (Brocklehurst) 'deserved the chastisement he had got.'

He did not recognise Currer Bell. What author would be without the advantage of being able to walk invisible? One is thereby enabled to keep such a quiet mind. I make this small observation in confidence.

What makes you say that the notice in the *Westminster Review* is not by Mr. Lewes? It expresses precisely his opinions, and he said he would perhaps insert a few lines in that periodical.

I have sometimes thought that I ought to have written to Mr. Lewes to thank him for his review in *Fraser*; and, indeed, I did write a note, but then it occurred to me that he did not require the author's thanks, and I feared it would be superfluous to send it, therefore I refrained; however, though I have not *expressed* gratitude, I have *felt* it.

I wish you, too, *many many* happy new years, and prosperity and success to you and yours.—Believe me, etc.,

CURRER BELL.

I have received the *Courier* and the *Oxford Chronicle*.

Letter 261

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *January 4th*, '48.

MY DEAR MISS NUSSEY,—I am not going to give you a 'nice *long* letter'—on the contrary, I mean to content myself with a shabby little note, to be engulphed in a letter of Charlotte's, which will, of course, be infinitely more acceptable to you than any production of mine, though I do not question your friendly

regard for me, or the indulgent welcome you would accord to a missive of mine even without a more agreeable companion to back it; but you must know there is a lamentable deficiency in my organ of language, which makes me almost as bad a hand at writing as talking unless I have something particular to say. I have now, however, to thank you and your friend Miss Ringrose for your kind letter and her pretty watch-guards, which I am sure we shall all of us value the more for being the work of her own hands. . . . You do not tell us how *you* bear the present unfavourable weather. We are all cut up by this cruel east wind, most of us, *i.e.* Charlotte, Emily, and I have had the influenza, or a bad cold instead, twice over within the space of a few weeks. Papa has had it once. Tabby has escaped it altogether. I have no news to tell you, for we have been nowhere, seen no one, and done nothing (to speak of) since you were here—and yet we contrive to be busy from morning to night. Flossy is fatter than ever, but still active enough to relish a sheep hunt. I hope you and your circle have been more fortunate in the matter of colds than we have.

With kind regards to all, I remain, dear Miss Nussey, yours ever affectionately, ANNE BRONTË.

Letter 262

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

January 11*th*, '48.

DEAR ELLEN,—How are you getting on by this time? How is your houseful of guests? Especially how is Amelia Ringrose? I hope you are not ill yourself in consequence of over fatigue, the only good side of the bustle seems to me to be that it will keep you on the alert—oblige you to act, and prevent you from sitting still and thinking. At present it is much better to be worried with too much company than to be alone; to be fagged with excess of action than to be ennuied with monotonous tranquillity. What a pity you and Amelia could not go to the party at Oakwell Hall! We have not been very comfortable here at home lately, far from it, indeed. Branwell has, by some means, contrived to get more money from the old quarter, and has led us a sad life with his absurd and often intolerable conduct. Papa is harassed day and night; we have little peace; he [Branwell] is always sick; has two or three times fallen down in fits; what will

be the ultimate end, God knows. But who is without their drawback, their scourge, their skeleton behind the curtain? It remains only to do one's best, and endure with patience.

I wish all Brookroyd a happy new year, and to you I dedicate an especial wish of your own.—Good-bye, dear Nell.

C. BRONTË.

Letter 263

TO GEORGE HENRY LEWES

HAWORTH, *January 12th*, 1848.

DEAR SIR,—I thank you, then, sincerely for your generous review; and it is with the sense of double content I express my gratitude, because I am now sure the tribute is not superfluous or obtrusive. You were not severe on *Jane Eyre*; you were very lenient. I am glad you told me my faults plainly in private, for in your public notice you touch on them so lightly, I should perhaps have passed them over, thus indicated, with too little reflection.

I mean to observe your warning about being careful how I undertake new works; my stock of materials is not abundant, but very slender; and besides, neither my experience, my acquirements, nor my powers are sufficiently varied to justify my ever becoming a frequent writer. I tell you this because your article in *Fraser* left in me an uneasy impression that you were disposed to think better of the author of *Jane Eyre* than that individual deserved; and I would rather you had a correct than a flattering opinion of me, even though I should never see you.

If I ever *do* write another book, I think I will have nothing of what you call 'melodrama'; I *think* so, but I am not sure. I *think*, too, I will endeavour to follow the counsel which shines out of Miss Austen's 'mild eyes,' 'to finish more and be more subdued'; but neither am I sure of that. When authors write best, or, at least, when they write most fluently, an influence seems to waken in them, which becomes their master—which will have its own way—putting out of view all behests but its own, dictating certain words, and insisting on their being used, whether vehement or measured in their nature; new-moulding characters, giving unthought-of turns to incidents, rejecting carefully elaborated old ideas, and suddenly creating and adopting new ones.

Is it not so? And should we try to counteract this influence? Can we indeed counteract it?

I am glad that another work of yours will soon appear; most curious shall I be to see whether you will write up to your own principles, and work out your own theories. You did not do it altogether in *Ranthorpe*—at least, not in the latter part; but the first portion was, I think, nearly without fault; then it had a pith, truth, significance in it which gave the book sterling value; but to write so one must have seen and known a great deal, and I have seen and known very little.

Why do you like Miss Austen so very much? I am puzzled on that point. What induced you to say that you would have rather written *Pride and Prejudice* or *Tom Jones*, than any of the Waverley Novels?

I had not seen *Pride and Prejudice* till I read that sentence of yours, and then I got the book. And what did I find? An accurate daguerreotyped portrait of a commonplace face; a carefully fenced, highly cultivated garden, with neat borders and delicate flowers; but no glance of a bright, vivid physiognomy, no open country, no fresh air, no blue hill, no bonny beck. I should hardly like to live with her ladies and gentlemen, in their elegant but confined houses. These observations will probably irritate you, but I shall run the risk.

Now I can understand admiration of George Sand; for though I never saw any of her works which I admired throughout (even *Consuelo*, which is the best, or the best that I have read, appears to me to couple strange extravagance with wondrous excellence), yet she has a grasp of mind which, if I cannot fully comprehend, I can very deeply respect: she is sagacious and profound; Miss Austen is only shrewd and observant.

Am I wrong; or were you hasty in what you said? If you have time I should be glad to hear further on this subject; if not, or if you think the question frivolous, do not trouble yourself to reply.—I am yours respectfully, C. BELL.

Letter 264

TO G. H. LEWES

January 18*th*, 1848.

DEAR SIR,—I must write one more note, though I had not intended to trouble you again so soon. I have to agree with you, and to differ from you.

You correct my crude remarks on the subject of the 'influence';

well, I accept your definition of what the effects of that influence should be; I recognise the wisdom of your rules for its regulation. . . .

What a strange lecture comes next in your letter! You say I must familiarise my mind with the fact that 'Miss Austen is not a poetess, has no "sentiment"' (you scornfully enclose the word in inverted commas), 'no eloquence, none of the ravishing enthusiasm of poetry'; and then you add, I *must* 'learn to acknowledge her as *one of the greatest artists, of the greatest painters of human character*, and one of the writers with the nicest sense of means to an end that ever lived.'

The last point only will I ever acknowledge.

Can there be a great artist without poetry?

What I call—what I will bend to, as a great artist, then—cannot be destitute of the divine gift. But by *poetry*, I am sure, you understand something different to what I do, as you do by 'sentiment.' It is *poetry*, as I comprehend the word, which elevates that masculine George Sand, and makes out of something coarse something godlike. It is 'sentiment,' in my sense of the term—sentiment jealously hidden, but genuine, which extracts the venom from that formidable Thackeray, and converts what might be corrosive poison into purifying elixir.

If Thackeray did not cherish in his large heart deep feeling for his kind, he would delight to exterminate; as it is, I believe, he wishes only to reform. Miss Austen being, as you say, without 'sentiment,' without *poetry*, maybe *is* sensible, real (more *real* than *true*), but she cannot be great.

I submit to your anger, which I have now excited (for have I not questioned the perfection of your darling?); the storm may pass over me. Nevertheless I will, when I can (I do not know when that will be, as I have no access to a circulating library), diligently peruse all Miss Austen's works, as you recommend. . . . You must forgive me for not always being able to think as you do, and still believe me yours gratefully, C. BELL.

Letter 265

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

January 22nd, 1848.

DEAR SIR,—I have received the *Morning Herald*, and was much pleased with the notice, chiefly on account of the reference

made to that portion of the preface which concerns Messrs. Smith & Elder. If my tribute of thanks can benefit my publishers, it is desirable that it should have as much publicity as possible.

I do not know if the part which relates to Mr. Thackeray is likely to be as well received; but whether generally approved of and understood or not, I shall not regret having written it, for I am convinced of its truth.[1]

I see I was mistaken in my idea that the *Athenæum* and others wished to ascribe the authorship of *Wuthering Heights* to Currer Bell; the contrary is the case, *Jane Eyre* is given to Ellis Bell and Mr. Newby, it appears, thinks it expedient so to frame his advertisements as to favour the misapprehension. If Mr. Newby had much sagacity he would see that Ellis Bell is strong enough to stand without being propped by Currer Bell, and would have disdained what Ellis himself of all things disdains—recourse to trickery. However, Ellis, Acton, and Currer care nothing for the matter personally; the public and the critics are welcome to confuse our identities as much as they choose; my only fear is lest Messrs. Smith & Elder should in some way be annoyed by it.

I was much interested in your account of Miss Kavanagh. The character you sketch belongs to a class I peculiarly esteem: one in which endurance combines with exertion, talent with goodness; where genius is found unmarred by extravagance, self-reliance unalloyed by self-complacency. It is a character which is, I believe, rarely found except where there has been toil to undergo and adversity to struggle against: it will only grow to perfection in a poor soil and in the shade; if the soil be too indigent, the shade too dank and thick, of course it dies where it sprung. But I trust this will not be the case with Miss Kavanagh. I trust she will struggle ere long into the sunshine. In you she has a kind friend to direct her, and I hope her mother will live to see the daughter, who yields to her such childlike duty, both happy and successful.

You asked me if I should like any copies of the second edition of *Jane Eyre*, and I said—no. It is true I do not want any for myself or my acquaintances, but if the request be not unusual, I should much like one to be given to Miss Kavanagh. If you would have the goodness, you might write on the fly-leaf that the

[1] This was the Dedication of the second edition of *Jane Eyre* to Thackeray.

book is presented with the author's best wishes for her welfare here and hereafter. My reason for wishing that she should have a copy is because she said the book had been to her a *suggestive* one, and I know that suggestive books are valuable to authors.

I am truly sorry to hear that Mr. Smith has had an attack of the prevalent complaint, but I trust his recovery is by this time complete. I cannot boast entire exemption from its ravages, as I now write under its depressing influence. Hoping that you have been more fortunate,—I am, dear sir, yours faithfully,

C. BELL.

Letter 266

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

HAWORTH, *January* 28*th*, 1848.

DEAR SIR,—I need not tell you that when I saw Mr. Thackeray's letter enclosed under your cover, the sight made me very happy. It was some time before I dared open it, lest my pleasure in receiving it should be mixed with pain on learning its contents —lest, in short, the dedication should have been, in some way, unacceptable to him.

And, to tell you the truth, I fear this must have been the case; he does not say so, his letter is most friendly in its noble simplicity, but he apprises me, at the commencement, of a circumstance which both surprised and dismayed me.

I suppose it is no indiscretion to tell you this circumstance, for you doubtless know it already. It appears that his private position is in some points similar to that I have ascribed to Mr. Rochester, that thence arose a report that *Jane Eyre* had been written by a governess in his family, and that the dedication coming now has confirmed everybody in the surmise.

Well may it be said that fact is often stranger than fiction! The coincidence struck me as equally unfortunate and extraordinary. Of course I knew nothing whatever of Mr. Thackeray's domestic concerns, he existed for me only as an author. Of all regarding his personality, station, connections, private history, I was, and am still in a great measure, totally in the dark; but I am *very very* sorry that my inadvertent blunder should have made his name and affairs a subject for common gossip.

The very fact of his not complaining at all and addressing me with such kindness, notwithstanding the pain and annoyance I must have caused him, increases my chagrin. I could not half express my regret to him in my answer, for I was restrained by the consciousness that that regret was just worth nothing at all—quite valueless for healing the mischief I had done.

Can you tell me anything more on this subject? or can you guess in what degree the unlucky coincidence would affect him—whether it would pain him much and deeply: for he says so little himself on the topic, I am at a loss to divine the exact truth—but I fear.

Do not think, my dear sir, from my silence respecting the advice you have, at different times, given me for my future literary guidance, that I am heedless of, or indifferent to, your kindness. I keep your letters and not unfrequently refer to them. Circumstances may render it impracticable for me to act up to the letter of what you counsel, but I think I comprehend the spirit of your precepts, and trust I shall be able to profit thereby. Details, situations which I do not understand and cannot personally inspect, I would not for the world meddle with, lest I should make even a more ridiculous mess of the matter than Mrs. Trollope did in her *Factory Boy.* Besides, not one feeling on any subject, public or private, will I ever affect that I do not really experience. Yet though I must limit my sympathies; though my observation cannot penetrate where the very deepest political and social truths are to be learnt; though many doors of knowledge which are open for you are for ever shut to me; though I must guess and calculate and grope my way in the dark, and come to uncertain conclusions unaided and alone where such writers as Dickens and Thackeray, having access to the shrine and image of Truth, have only to go into the temple, lift the veil a moment, and come out and say what they have seen—yet with every disadvantage, I mean still, in my own contracted way, to do my best. Imperfect my best will be, and poor, and compared with the works of the true masters—of that greatest modern master Thackeray in especial (for it is him I at heart reverence with all my strength)—it will be trifling, but I trust not affected or counterfeit. Believe me, my dear sir, yours with regard and respect.

CURRER BELL.

Letter 267

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

January 28th, '48.

DEAR ELLEN,—I meant to have written to you by to-day's post, but two or three little things occurred to hinder me. I did not answer Amelia's letter, not because I was indifferent to her kindness in writing or to the pleasure of hearing from her, but because I really had nothing to say worth saying, or which could interest her. I might, indeed, have sat down and concocted something elaborate, but where is the use of scribbling letters of that sort? It is merely time thrown away.

I am very glad to hear she is better, and that she still remains at Brookroyd, but I fear, poor thing, she will feel the change severely when she returns to her somewhat uncongenial home.

She always speaks of you in her notes with such a trusting, childlike affection; it is easy to see the loss of your society will be a very great loss indeed to her. My praise of you does not half satisfy her. I said you had your faults or you would not be human, but that with all these you were, etc.—some very good things. Amelia declared I quite amused her by talking in that way—*to her* you seemed faultless!

I hope she will not regard many people with the same over-partial affection, or it will be her lot in life to be often disappointed.

It is kind in you to continue to write occasionally to Anne—for I think your letters do her good and give her pleasure. The Robinsons still amaze me by the continued frequency and constancy of their correspondence. Poor girls! they still complain of their mother's proceedings; that woman is a hopeless being; calculated to bring a curse wherever she goes by the mixture of weakness, perversion, and deceit in her nature. Sir Edward Scott's wife is said to be dying; if she goes I suppose they will marry, that is if Mrs. R. *can* marry. She affirmed her husband's will bound her to remain single, but I do not believe anything she says.

We all thank you for the pretty, tasteful watch-guards you sent; the steel beads glitter like diamonds by candle-light. We chose them by lot. I got the single bead, Anne the double, Emily the treble.

I will try to get this off to-day.—Good-bye, yours,

C. BRONTË.

Letter 268

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

February 1st, '48.

DEAR ELLEN,—I shall not scold you for being so long in writing to me, but I really was beginning to fear there was some unpleasant cause for your silence; however it is all right now as I have heard from you at last, and as you are not ill. I was surprised but pleased to find that Amelia Ringrose was still with you; her long stay will do her good, and I doubt not her society has enabled you to pass the winter more pleasantly than you would alone.

I think the choice of the Bishop of Chester to the Primacy is as good a one as under the circumstances could have been made. The curates, as you conjecture, are wroth on the circumstance.

Papa received a letter from a brother of H——. It expressed shame and indignation at what the writer termed the shameful termination of his ministry in England. It appears he absconded without the knowledge or sanction of his friends, and that they do not know where he is or whether he is yet in the land of the living. His principles must have been bad indeed, he can have had no sense of honour. Amongst other debts it appears he got five pounds of Miss Sugden for a charitable purpose, and that he appropriated the money to his own use.—Believe me, dear Nell, yours, C. B.

Letter 269

TO MISS KAVANAGH [1]

Feby. 2nd, 1848.

DEAR MADAM,—*Jane Eyre* is but a defective production, yet I dare say whatever merit it has will be appreciated by you; of its faults, too, you will be a competent judge: you had a right, therefore, to possess a copy. I only wish it had been in my power to offer you some less insipid token of esteem than a

[1] Julia Kavanagh (1824-1877) was the daughter of M. P. Kavanagh, who wrote *The Wanderings of Lucan and Dinah*, a poetical romance, and other works. Miss Kavanagh was born at Thurles and died at Nice. Her first book, *The Three Paths*, a tale for children, was published in 1847. *Madeline*, a story founded on the life of a peasant girl of Auvergne, in 1848. *Women in France during the Eighteenth Century* appeared in 1850, *Nathalie* the same year. In the succeeding years she wrote innumerable stories and biographical sketches.

novel which had already undergone perusal. With sincere wishes for the success of your own undertakings, I remain, my dear madam, yours faithfully, CURRER BELL.

Letter 270

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

February 5th, 1848.

DEAR SIR,—A representation of *Jane Eyre* at a minor theatre would no doubt be a rather afflicting spectacle to the author of that work. I suppose all would be wofully exaggerated and painfully vulgarised by the actors and actresses on such a stage. What, I cannot help asking myself, would they make of Mr. Rochester? And the picture my fancy conjures up by way of reply is a somewhat humiliating one. What would they make of Jane Eyre? I see something very pert and very affected as an answer to that query.[1]

[1] Although *Jane Eyre* has been dramatised by several hands, the play has never been as popular as one might suppose from a story of such thrilling incident. I can find no trace of the particular version which is referred to in this letter, but in the next year the novel was dramatised by John Brougham, the actor and dramatist, and produced in New York on March 26, 1849. Brougham is rather an interesting figure. An Irishman by birth, he had a chequered experience of every phase of theatrical life both in London and New York. It was he who adapted 'The Queen's Motto' and 'Lady Audley's Secret,' and he collaborated with Dion Boucicault in 'London Assurance.' In 1849 he seems to have been managing Niblo's Garden in New York, and in the following year the Lyceum Theatre in Broadway. Miss Wemyss took the title rôle in *Jane Eyre*, J. Gilbert was Rochester, and Mrs. J. Gilbert was Lady Ingram; and though the play proved only moderately successful, it was revived in 1856 at Laura Keene's Varieties at New York, with Laura Keene as Jane Eyre. This version has been published by Samuel French, and is also in Dick's *Penny Plays*. Divided into five Acts and twelve Scenes, Brougham starts the story at Lowood Academy. The second Act introduces us to Rochester's house, and the curtain descends in the fourth as Jane announces that the house is in flames. At the end of the fifth, Brougham reproduced *verbatim* much of the conversation of the dialogue between Rochester and Jane. Perhaps the best-known dramatisation of the novel was that by the late W. G. Wills, who divided the story into four Acts. His play was produced on Saturday, December 23, 1882, at the Globe Theatre, by Mrs. Bernard-Beere, with the following cast:—

Jane Eyre,	Mrs. Bernard-Beere.
Lady Ingram,	Miss Carlotta Leclercq.
Blanche Ingram,	Miss Kate Bishop.
Mary Ingram,	Miss Maggie Hunt.
Miss Beechey,	Miss Nellie Jordan.
Mrs. Fairfax,	Miss Alexes Leighton.
Grace Poole,	Miss Masson.
Bertha,	Miss D'Almaine.

Still, were it in my power, I should certainly make a point of being myself a witness of the exhibition. Could I go quietly and alone, I undoubtedly should go; I should endeavour to endure both rant and whine, strut and grimace, for the sake of the useful observations to be collected in such a scene.

As to whether I wish *you* to go, that is another question. I am afraid I have hardly fortitude enough really to wish it. One can endure being disgusted with one's own work, but that a friend should share the repugnance is unpleasant. Still, I know it would interest me to hear both your account of the exhibition and any ideas which the effect of the various parts on the spectators might suggest to you. In short, I should like to know what you would think, and to hear what you would say on the subject. But you must not go merely to satisfy my curiosity; you must do as you think proper. Whatever you decide on will content me: if you do *not* go, you will be spared a vulgarising impression of the book; if you *do* go, I shall perhaps gain a little information—either alternative has its advantage.

I am glad to hear that the second edition is selling, for the sake of Messrs. Smith & Elder. I rather feared it would remain on hand, and occasion loss. *Wuthering Heights*, it appears, is selling too, and consequently Mr. Newby is getting into marvellously good tune with his authors.—I remain, my dear sir, yours faithfully, CURRER BELL.

Letter 271

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

February 15*th*, 1848.

DEAR SIR,—Your letter, as you may fancy, has given me something to think about. It has presented to my mind a curious

Adèle, ...	Mdlle. Clemence Colle.
Mr. Rochester, ...	Mr. Charles Kelly.
Lord Desmond, ...	Mr. A. M. Denison.
Rev. Mr. Price, ...	Mr. H. E. Russel.
Nat Lee, ...	Mr. H. H. Cameron.
James, ...	Mr. C. Stevens.

Mr. Wills confined the story to Thornfield Hall. One critic described the drama at the time as 'not so much a play as a long conversation.' A few years ago James Willing made a melodrama of *Jane Eyre* under the title of *Poor Relations*. This piece was performed at the Standard, Surrey, and Park Theatres. A version of the story, dramatised by Charlotte Birch-Pfeiffer, called *Die Waise von Lowood*, has been rather popular in Germany. It was also dramatised in Danish and Italian.

picture, for the description you give is so vivid, I seem to realise it all. I wanted information and I have got it. You have raised the veil from a corner of your great world—your London—and have shown me a glimpse of what I might call loathsome, but which I prefer calling *strange*. Such, then, is a sample of what amuses the metropolitan populace! Such is a view of one of their haunts!

Did I not say that I would have gone to this theatre and witnessed this exhibition if it had been in my power? What absurdities people utter when they speak of they know not what!

You must try now to forget entirely what you saw.

As to my next book, I suppose it will grow to maturity in time, as grass grows or corn ripens; but I cannot force it. It makes slow progress thus far: it is not every day, nor even every week, that I can write what is worth reading; but I shall (if not hindered by other matters) be industrious when the humour comes, and in due time I hope to see such a result as I shall not be ashamed to offer you, my publishers, and the public.

Have you not two classes of writers—the author and the bookmaker? And is not the latter more prolific than the former? Is he not, indeed, wonderfully fertile? but does the public, or the publisher even, make much account of his productions? Do not both tire of him in time?

Is it not because authors aim at a style of living better suited to merchants, professed gain-seekers, that they are often compelled to degenerate to mere bookmakers, and to find the great stimulus of their pen in the necessity of earning money? If they were not ashamed to be frugal, might they not be more independent?

I should much—very much—like to take that quiet view of the 'great world' you allude to, but I have as yet won no right to give myself such a treat: it must be for some future day—when, I don't know. Ellis, I imagine, would soon turn aside from the spectacle in disgust. I do not think he admits it as his creed that 'the proper study of mankind is man'—at least not the artificial man of cities. In some points I consider Ellis somewhat of a theorist: now and then he broaches ideas which strike my sense as much more daring and original than practical; his reason may be in advance of mine, but certainly it often travels a

different road. I should say Ellis will not be seen in his full strength till he is seen as an essayist.

I return to you the note enclosed under your cover; it is from the editor of the *Berwick Warder*; he wants a copy of *Jane Eyre* to review.

With renewed thanks for your continued goodness to me,—I remain, my dear sir, yours faithfully, CURRER BELL.

Letter 272

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

February 25th, 1848.

MY DEAR SIR,—I thank you for your note; its contents moved me much, though not to unmingled feelings of exultation. Louis Philippe (unhappy and sordid old man!) and M. Guizot doubtless merit the sharp lesson they are now being taught, because they have both proved themselves men of dishonest hearts. And every struggle any nation makes in the cause of Freedom and Truth has something noble in it—something that makes me wish it success; but I cannot believe that France—or at least Paris—will ever be the battle-ground of true Liberty, or the scene of its real triumphs. I fear she does not know 'how genuine glory is put on.' Is that strength to be found in her which will not bend 'but in magnanimous weakness'? Have not her 'unceasing changes' as yet always brought 'perpetual emptiness'? Has Paris the materials within her for thorough reform? Mean, dishonest Guizot being discarded, will any better successor be found for him than brilliant, unprincipled Thiers?

But I damp your enthusiasm, which I would not wish to do, for true enthusiasm is a fine feeling whose flash I admire wherever I see it.

The little note enclosed in yours is from a French lady, who asks my consent to the translation of *Jane Eyre* into the French language. I thought it better to consult you before I replied. I suppose she is competent to produce a decent translation, though one or two errors of orthography in her note rather afflict the eye; but I know that it is not unusual for what are considered well-educated French women to fail in the point of writing their mother tongue correctly. But whether competent or not, I presume she has a right to translate the book with or without my

consent. She gives her address: Mdlle B——, care of W. Cumming, Esq., 23 North Bank, Regent's Park.

Shall I reply to her note in the affirmative?

Waiting your opinion and answer,—I remain, dear sir, yours faithfully, C. BELL.

Letter 273

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

February 28*th*, 1848.

DEAR SIR,—I have done as you advised me respecting Mdlle B——, thanked her for her courtesy, and explained that I do not wish my consent to be regarded in the light of a formal sanction of the translation.

From the papers of Saturday I had learnt the abdication of Louis Philippe, the flight of the royal family, and the proclamation of a republic in France. Rapid movements these, and some of them difficult of comprehension to a remote spectator. What sort of spell has withered Louis Philippe's strength? Why, after having so long infatuatedly clung to Guizot, did he at once ignobly relinquish him? Was it panic that made him so suddenly quit his throne and abandon his adherents without a struggle to retain one or aid the other?

Perhaps it might have been partly fear, but I dare say it was still more long-gathering weariness of the dangers and toils of royalty. Few will pity the old monarch in his flight, yet I own he seems to me an object of pity. His sister's death shook him; years are heavy on him; the sword of Damocles has long been hanging over his head. One cannot forget that monarchs and ministers are only human, and have only human energies to sustain them; and often they are sore beset. Party spirit has no mercy; indignant Freedom seldom shows forbearance in her hour of revolt. I wish you *could* see the aged gentleman trudging down Cornhill with his umbrella and carpet-bag, in good earnest; he would be safe in England; John Bull might laugh at him, but he would do him no harm.

How strange it appears to see literary and scientific names figuring in the list of members of a Provisional Government! How would it sound if Carlyle and Sir John Herschel and Tennyson and Mr. Thackeray and Douglas Jerrold were selected to manufacture a new constitution for England? Whether do

such men sway the public mind most effectually from their quiet studies or from a council-chamber?

And Thiers is set aside for a time; but won't they be glad of him by-and-by? Can they set aside entirely anything so clever, so subtle, so accomplished, so aspiring—in a word, so thoroughly French, as he is? Is he not the man to bide his time—to watch while unskilful theorists try their hand at administration and fail ; and then to step out and show them how it should be done?

One would have thought political disturbance the natural element of a mind like Thiers'; but I know nothing of him except from his writings, and I always think he writes as if the shade of Bonaparte were walking to and fro in the room behind him and dictating every line he pens, sometimes approaching and bending over his shoulder, *pour voir de ses yeux* that such an action or event is represented or *mis*represented (as the case may be) exactly as he wishes it. Thiers seems to have contemplated Napoleon's character till he has imbibed some of its nature. Surely he must be an ambitious man, and, if so, surely he will at this juncture struggle to rise.

You should not apologise for what you call your 'crudities.' You know I like to hear your opinions and views on whatever subject it interests you to discuss.

From the little inscription outside your note I conclude you sent me the *Examiner*. I thank you therefore for your kind intention, and am sorry some unscrupulous person at the Post Office frustrated it, as no paper has reached my hands. I suppose one ought to be thankful that letters are respected, as newspapers are by no means sure of safe conveyance.—I remain, dear sir, yours sincerely, C. BELL.

Letter 274

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

March 3rd, 1848.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have received the *Christian Remembrancer*, and read the review. It is written with some ability; but to do justice was evidently not the critic's main object, therefore he excuses himself from performing that duty.

I dare say the reviewer imagines that Currer Bell ought to be extremely afflicted, very much cut up, by some smart things

he says—this, however, is not the case. C. Bell is on the whole rather encouraged than dispirited by the review: the hard-wrung praise extorted reluctantly from a foe is the most precious praise of all—you are sure that this, at least, has no admixture of flattery. I fear he has too high an opinion of my abilities and of what I can do; but that is his own fault. In other respects, he aims his shafts in the dark, and the success, or, rather, ill-success of his hits makes me laugh rather than cry. His shafts of sarcasm are nicely polished, keenly pointed; he should not have wasted them in shooting at a mark he cannot see.

I hope such reviews will not make much difference with me, and that if the spirit moves me in future to say anything about priests, etc., I shall say it with the same freedom as heretofore. I hope also that their anger will not make *me* angry. As a body, I had no ill-will against them to begin with, and I feel it would be an error to let opposition engender such ill-will. A few individuals may possibly be called upon to sit for their portraits some time; if their brethren in general dislike the resemblance and abuse the artist—*tant pis!*—Believe me, my dear sir, yours sincerely, C. BELL.

Letter 275

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

March 6th, '48.

DEAR ELLEN,—I am afraid you will by this time begin in good earnest to feel the void Amelia must have left by her departure. She really seems to be, from what you say, and I have a certain dependence on your accurate judgment of character, one of the most prepossessing as well as most sterling characters that can well be imagined. Why is it that sound, strong health of body is so rarely visited with perfect amiability of disposition? Why is it that when we love a fellow-creature very much we are often kept in constant fear of losing them? I suppose to prevent us from regarding them with a too idolatrous attachment.

The symptoms you mention seem to indicate the presence of a constant low fever in the system, a bad sign, often accompanying scrophulous (*sic*) habits. Anne suffered from much the same ailments, except that constant thirst, I recollect, was one of her peculiarities, and you have not mentioned that as observable in Amelia. Mary Taylor, too, has more than once been in

the state you describe—she has however got the better of it, and perhaps that may be the case with Miss Ringrose—indeed, I trust and believe it will, for I fancy that complaint usually kills in early youth if it is destined to be fatal.

You ask me to write to her occasionally, but I don't think I shall do anything of the kind, for I cannot see of what use my letters could be; you can say all to her in the way of advice and consolation that I could say, and more than all, as being thoroughly acquainted with her case and character. I am glad she cherishes no false hopes about George, for such hopes, long deferred as they too probably would be, would only have a consuming and injurious tendency.

We have had some curious, startling news lately from France, and I believe this news has been received with enthusiasm by a party in London—who regard the proclamation of a republican form of government in France as a grand triumph of freedom. What the end will be I don't know, nor does anybody else, I fancy. The provisional government have committed no atrocities as yet, thank God! and they have taken one good and humane step—the abolition of the punishment of death. It is well the French royal family have arrived safely in England; our little Island seems literally to be the home of the world, and the last refuge of exiled Kings.

Write to me as soon as the multiplicity of your tasks will permit you. Give my love to all, and believe me, dear Ellen,—Yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

Letter 276

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

March 11th, 1848.

DEAR SIR,—I have just received the copy of the second edition, and will look over it, and send the corrections as soon as possible; I will also, since you think it advisable, avail myself of the opportunity of a third edition to correct the mistake respecting the authorship of *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*.

As to your second suggestion, it is, one can see at a glance, a very judicious and happy one; but I cannot adopt it, because I have not the skill you attribute to me. It is not enough to have the artist's eye, one must also have the artist's hand to turn the first gift to practical account. I have, in my day, wasted a certain

quantity of Bristol board and drawing-paper, crayons and cakes of colour, but when I examine the contents of my portfolio now, it seems as if during the years it has been lying closed some fairy had changed what I once thought sterling coin into dry leaves, and I feel much inclined to consign the whole collection of drawings to the fire; I see they have no value. If, then, *Jane Eyre* is ever to be illustrated, it must be by some other hand than that of its author. But I hope no one will be at the trouble to make portraits of my characters. Bulwer and Byron heroes and heroines are very well, they are all of them handsome; but my personages are mostly unattractive in look, and therefore ill-adapted to figure in ideal portraits. At the best, I have always thought such representations futile. You will not easily find a second Thackeray. How he can render, with a few black lines and dots, shades of expression so fine, so real; traits of character so minute, so subtle, so difficult to seize and fix, I cannot tell—I can only wonder and admire. Thackeray may not be a painter, but he is a wizard of a draughtsman; touched with his pencil, paper lives. And then his drawing is so refreshing; after the wooden limbs one is accustomed to see portrayed by commonplace illustrators, his shapes of bone and muscle clothed with flesh, correct in proportion and anatomy, are a real relief. All is true in Thackeray. If Truth were again a goddess, Thackeray should be her high priest.

I read my preface over with some pain—I did not like it. I wrote it when I was a little enthusiastic, like you, about the French Revolution. I wish I had written it in a cool moment; I should have said the same things, but in a different manner. One may be as enthusiastic as one likes about an author who has been dead a century or two, but I see it is a fault to bore the public with enthusiasm about a living author. I promise myself to take better care in future. *Still* I will *think* as I please.

Are the London republicans, and *you* amongst the number, cooled down yet? I suppose not, because your French brethren are acting very nobly. The abolition of slavery and of the punishment of death for political offences are two glorious deeds, but how will they get over the question of the organisation of labour! Such theories will be the sand-bank on which their vessel will run aground if they don't mind. Lamartine, there is not doubt, would make an excellent legislator for a nation of Lamartines—but where is that nation? I hope these observations are sceptical and cool enough.—Believe me, my dear sir, yours sincerely, C. BELL.

Letter 277

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

March 11*th*, '48.

DEAR ELLEN,—There is a great deal of good sense in your last letter. Be thankful that God gave you sense, for what are beauty, wealth, or even health without it? I had a note from Miss Ringrose the other day. I do not think I shall write again for the reasons I before mentioned to you, but the note moved me much; it was so truly amiable, so sincere. It was almost all about her 'dear Ellen,' a kind of gentle enthusiasm of affection, enough to make one at once smile and weep,—her feelings are half truth, half illusion. No human being could be altogether what she supposes you to be, yet your kindness must have been very great to her to have awakened such attachment in return. Whether you will miss her or not, she will indeed miss you. Mrs. Nussey's letter is interesting and nicely expressed. People often write more affectionately to their relatives than they speak or behave. If one were only rich, how delightful it would be to travel and spend the winter in climates where there are no winters. I trust Henry's health will be re-established. What a state the family must be in! I daresay Ann is a great comfort to them. Give my love to your mother and sisters.—Believe me, faithfully yours,

C. BRONTË.

Letter 278

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

March 28*th*, '48.

DEAR ELLEN,—I return the two letters, both of which interested me much. Miss Carr's is characteristic—there is much of the old bitter character still, though in an improved form, a certain keen edge her nature still possesses, though covered carefully up in a neat case of good manners, and, I hope, and indeed am inclined to believe, good principles.

There is, and there always was amidst much that is noxious, a touch of something that is superior about Miss Carr, no greatness of mind whatever, but a little refinement, a considerable aptitude for cultivation. I always found her an intelligent though never an agreeable pupil, for some reason or other she was docile with me, though utterly untractable with Miss Wooler. I pity Marianne, if Miss Carr represents the case aright, and if she has really not been flirting. Why should Mrs. Anderton wish to

compel her to marry the prig of a curate? (as prig I have no doubt he is). It is a shame.

I had a letter from Miss Wooler a few days ago. She says that Mary will probably be advanced before she can redeem her pledge of coming to spend a month at Brookroyd, and hopes that if anything occurs in the meantime to render her visit inconvenient, you will have no hesitation in mentioning it. She is now staying at the Vicarage, at Heckmondwike.

Amelia Ringrose gives a good account of Mary Gorham's brother; what age is he, older or younger than you? It is nonsense building castles in the air. But certainly if some kind, sensible man, with something competent to live on, would take a fancy to ask you to have him, and you could take a fancy to say 'yes,' I should be glad to hear of the event. However, I don't expect it, the world takes its own course, and we cannot help it. I was glad to see by the papers that poor Mrs. S—— is released from her sufferings at last. I trust you are all well at home. Love to all. —Yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

Letter 279

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

March 29th, 1848.

MY DEAR SIR,—The notice from the *Church of England Quarterly Review* is not on the whole a bad one. True, it condemns the tendency of *Jane Eyre*, and seems to think Mr. Rochester should have been represented as going through the mystic process of 'regeneration' before any respectable person could have consented to believe his contrition for the past errors sincere; true, also, that it casts a doubt on Jane's creed, and leaves it doubtful whether she was Hindoo, Mahommedan, or infidel. But notwithstanding these eccentricities, it is a conscientious notice, very unlike that in the *Mirror*, for instance, which seemed the result of a feeble sort of spite, whereas this is the critic's real opinion: some of the ethical and theological notions are not according to his system, and he disapproves of them.

I am glad to hear that Mr. Lewes's new work is soon to appear, and pleased also to learn that Messrs. Smith & Elder are the publishers. Mr. Lewes mentioned in the last note I received from him that he had just finished writing his new novel, and I have been on the look-out for the advertisement of its appearance ever since. I shall long to read it, if it were only to get a further insight into the author's character. I read *Ranthorpe* with lively interest—

there was much true talent in its pages. Two-thirds of it I thought excellent, the latter part seemed more hastily and sketchily written.

I trust Miss Kavanagh's work will meet with the success that, from your account, I am certain she and it deserve. I think I have met with an outline of the facts on which her tale is founded in some periodical, *Chambers's Journal* I believe. No critic, however rigid, will find fault with 'the tendency' of her work, I should think.

I will tell you why you cannot fully sympathise with the French, or feel any firm confidence in their future movements: because too few of them are Lamartines, too many Ledru Rollins. That, at least, is my reason for watching their proceedings with more dread than hope. With the Germans it is different: to their rational and justifiable efforts for liberty one can heartily wish well.

It seems, as you say, as if change drew near England too. She is divided by the sea from the lands where it is making thrones rock, but earthquakes roll lower than the ocean, and we know neither the day nor the hour when the tremor and heat, passing beneath our island, may unsettle and dissolve its foundations. Meantime, one thing is certain, all will in the end work together for good.

You mention Thackeray and the last number of *Vanity Fair*. The more I read Thackeray's works the more certain I am that he stands alone—alone in his sagacity, alone in his truth, alone in his feeling (his feeling, though he makes no noise about it, is about the most genuine that ever lived on a printed page), alone in his power, alone in his simplicity, alone in his self-control. Thackeray is a Titan, so strong that he can afford to perform with calm the most herculean feats; there is the charm and majesty of repose in his greatest efforts; *he* borrows nothing from fever, his is never the energy of delirium—his energy is sane energy, deliberate energy, thoughtful energy. The last number of *Vanity Fair* proves this peculiarly. Forcible, exciting in its force, still more impressive than exciting, carrying on the interest of the narrative in a flow, deep, full, resistless, it is still quiet—as quiet as reflection, as quiet as memory; and to me there are parts of it that sound as solemn as an oracle. Thackeray is never borne away by his own ardour—he has it under control. His genius obeys him—it is his servant, it works no fantastic changes at its own wild will, it must still achieve the task which reason and sense assign it, and none other. Thackeray is unique. I *can* say no more, I *will* say no less.—Believe me, yours sincerely, C. BELL.

Letter 280

TO MISS WOOLER

HAWORTH, *March 31st*, 1848.

MY DEAR MISS WOOLER,—I had been wishing to hear from you for some time before I received your last. There has been so much sickness during the last winter, and the influenza especially has been so severe and so generally prevalent, that the sight of suffering around us has frequently suggested fears for absent friends. Ellen Nussey told me, indeed, that neither you nor Miss C. Wooler had escaped the influenza, but, since your letter contains no allusion to your own health or hers, I trust you are completely recovered. I am most thankful to say that papa has hitherto been exempted from any attack. My sisters and myself have each had a visit from it, but Anne is the only one with whom it stayed long or did much mischief; in her case it was attended with distressing cough and fever; but she is now better, though it has left her chest weak.

I remember well wishing my lot had been cast in the troubled times of the late war, and seeing in its exciting incidents a kind of stimulating charm which it made my pulse beat fast only to think of—I remember even, I think, being a little impatient that you would not fully sympathise with my feelings on this subject, that you heard my aspirations and speculations very tranquilly, and by no means seemed to think the flaming sword could be any pleasant addition to the joys of paradise. I have now outlived youth; and, though I dare not say that I have outlived all its illusions, that the romance is quite gone from life, the veil fallen from truth, and that I see both in naked reality, yet, certainly, many things are not to me what they were ten years ago; and amongst the rest, the 'pomp and circumstance of war' have quite lost in my eyes their factitious glitter. I have still no doubt that the shock of moral earthquakes wakens a vivid sense of life both in nations and individuals; that the fear of dangers on a broad national scale diverts men's minds momentarily from brooding over small private perils, and, for the time, gives them something like largeness of views; but, as little doubt have I that convulsive revolutions put back the world in all that is good, check civilisation, bring the dregs of society to its surface—in short, it appears to me that insurrections and battles are the

acute diseases of nations, and that their tendency is to exhaust by their violence the vital energies of the countries where they occur. That England may be spared the spasms, cramps, and frenzy-fits now contorting the Continent and threatening Ireland, I earnestly pray!

With the French and Irish I have no sympathy. With the Germans and Italians I think the case is different—as different as the love of freedom is from the lust of license.

To pass to other subjects, perhaps more within the grasp of my comprehension; about a fortnight since I had a letter from ——.[1]

Letter 281

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

April 20th, '48.

Dear Ellen,—I send you the drawing and copy which is Anne's doing. Miss Ringrose's letter is the most interesting I have yet seen, but I think when you write again you cannot give her too plain an explanation of the real state of matters; the longer she is suffered to indulge false hopes, the more bitter will be her final disappointment. You said I was to think of you on Monday, why? The 20th is not your birthday, is it? I thought it was the 22nd. I return your kind wishes on that point with interest.

It is hoped Mrs. Heald will now have better health. What does Mrs. J. Swain know about J. T—— and I. N——, what are her reasons for incredulity?

I had a very short note from Ellen Taylor last week, she is at Hunsworth. Joe Taylor was at Brussels. No news yet from Mary. I suppose you have received my last, ere this; it crossed yours.—Good-bye, dear Nell, C. B.

Letter 282

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

[*Undated*].

Dear Ellen,—I have just received your little parcel and beg to thank you in all our names for its contents, and also for your letter, of the arrival of which I was, to speak truth, getting rather impatient.

The Housewife's travelling companion is a most commodious

[1] This letter is mutilated and cannot be completed.

thing—just the sort of article which suits one to act, and which yet, I should never have the courage or industry to sit down and make for myself; I shall keep it for occasions of going from home, it will save me a world of trouble; it must have required some thought to arrange the various compartments and their contents so aptly. I had quite forgotten, till your letter reminded me, that it was the anniversary of your birthday and mine. I am now thirty-two. Youth is gone—gone—and will never come back: can't help it. I wish you many returns of your birthday and increase of happiness with increase of years. It seems to me that sorrow must come sometime to everybody, and those who scarcely taste it in their youth, often have a more brimming and bitter cup to drain in after life; whereas, those who exhaust the dregs early, who drink the lees before the wine, may reasonably expect a purer and more palatable draught to succeed. So, at least, one fain would hope. It touched me at first a little painfully to hear of your effort, but on second thoughts I discovered this to be quite a foolish feeling. You are doing right even though you should not gain much. The effort will do you good; no one ever does regret a step made towards self-help; it is so much gained in independence. Is Mary Swain better?

Give my love to your mother and sisters.—Yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

Letter 283

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

April 25*th*, '48.

DEAR ELLEN,—I was not at all surprised at the contents of your note; indeed what part of it was new to us? Joe Taylor has his good and bad side like most others; there is his own original nature, and there are the alterations the world has made in him. Meantime, why do Birstall and Gomersall trouble themselves with matching him? Let him in God's name court half the country-side and marry the other half, if such procedure seem good in his eyes, and let him do it all in quietness, he has his own botherations no doubt; it does not seem to be such very easy work getting married even for a man, since it is necessary to make up to so many ladies. More tranquil are those who have settled their bargain with celibacy.

I like Miss Ringrose's letters more and more, her goodness is indeed better than mere talent. I fancy she will never be married,

but the amiability of her character will give her comfort; to be sure one has only her letters to judge from, and letters often deceive, but hers seem so artless and unaffected. Still, were I in your place, I should feel uneasy in the midst of this correspondence. Does a doubt of mutual satisfaction in case you should one day meet never torment you?

I am sure you have done right to be plain with her about George. She seems at last to have caught a glimpse of the real truth.

Anne says it pleases her to think that you have kept her little drawing, she would rather have done it for you than for a stranger.

I have got a trifle of a headache to-day, and can write only in the most stupid manner.

Good-bye to you, dear Nell. Give my love to your mother and sisters. C. BRONTË.

Letter 284

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

April 26th, 1848.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have now read *Rose, Blanche, and Violet*, and I will tell you, as well as I can, what I think of it. Whether it is an improvement on *Ranthorpe* I do not know, for I liked *Ranthorpe* much; but, at any rate, it contains more of a good thing. I find in it the same power, but more fully developed.

The author's character is seen in every page, which makes the book interesting—far more interesting than any story could do; but it is what the writer himself says that attracts, far more than what he puts into the mouths of his characters. G. H. Lewes is, to my perception, decidedly the most original character in the book. . . . The didactic passages seem to me the best—far the best—in the work; very acute, very profound, are some of the views there given, and very clearly they are offered to the reader. He is a just thinker; he is a sagacious observer; there is wisdom in his theory, and, I doubt not, energy in his practice. But why, then, are you often provoked with him while you read? How does he manage, while teaching, to make his hearer feel as if his business was, not quietly to receive the doctrines propounded, but to combat them? You acknowledge that he offers you gems of pure truth: why do you keep perpetually scrutinising them for flaws?

Mr. Lewes, I divine, with all his talents and honesty, must have some faults of manner; there must be a touch too much of dogmatism: a dash extra of confidence in him, sometimes. This you think while you are reading the book; but when you have closed it and laid it down, and sat a few minutes collecting your thoughts, and settling your impressions, you find the idea or feeling predominant in your mind to be pleasure at the fuller acquaintance you have made with a fine mind and a true heart, with high abilities and manly principles. I hope he will not be long ere he publishes another book. His emotional scenes are somewhat too uniformly vehement: would not a more subdued style of treatment often have produced a more masterly effect? Now and then Mr. Lewes takes a French pen into his hand, wherein he differs from Mr. Thackeray, who always uses an English quill. However, the French pen does not far mislead Mr. Lewes; he wields it with British muscles. All honour to him for the excellent general tendency of his book!

He gives no charming picture of London literary society, and especially the female part of it; but all coteries, whether they be literary, scientific, political, or religious, must, it seems to me, have a tendency to change truth into affectation. When people belong to a clique, they must, I suppose, in some measure, write, talk, think, and live for that clique; a harassing and narrowing necessity. I trust the press and the public show themselves disposed to give the book the reception it merits; and that is a very cordial one, far beyond anything due to a Bulwer or D'Israeli production.—I am, dear sir, yours sincerely, C. BELL.

Letter 285

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

April 28*th*, '48.

DEAR ELLEN,—Write another letter, and explain that last note of yours distinctly. If your allusions are to myself, which I suppose they are, understand this—I have given no one a right to gossip about me, and am not to be judged by frivolous conjectures, emanating from any quarter whatever. Let me know what you heard, and from whom you heard it. You do wrong to feel any pain from any circumstance, or to suppose yourself slighted. You can only chagrin me and yourself by such an idea, and not do any good or make any difference in any way. C. BRONTË.

Letter 286

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

May 1st, 1848.

MY DEAR SIR,—I am glad you sent me your letter just as you had written it—without revisal, without retrenching or softening touch, because I cannot doubt that I am a gainer by the omission.

It would be useless to attempt opposition to your opinions, since, in fact, to read them was to recognise, almost point for point, a clear definition of objections I had already felt, but had found neither the power nor the will to express. Not the power, because I find it very difficult to analyse closely, or to criticise in appropriate words; and not the will, because I was afraid of doing Mr. Lewes injustice. I preferred overrating to underrating the merits of his work.

Mr. Lewes's sincerity, energy, and talent assuredly command the reader's respect, but on what points he depends to win his attachment I know not. I do not think he cares to excite the pleasant feelings which incline the taught to the teacher as much in friendship as in reverence. The display of his acquirements, to which almost every page bears testimony — citations from Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish, French, and German authors covering as with embroidery the texture of his English—awes and astonishes the plain reader; but if, in addition, you permit yourself to require the refining charm of delicacy, the elevating one of imagination—if you permit yourself to be as fastidious and exacting in these matters as, by your own confession, it appears *you* are, then Mr. Lewes must necessarily inform you that he does not deal in the article; probably he will add that *therefore* it must be non-essential. I should fear he might even stigmatise imagination as a figment, and delicacy as an affectation.

An honest rough heartiness Mr. Lewes will give you; yet in case you have the misfortune to remark that the heartiness might be quite as honest if it were less rough, would you not run the risk of being termed a sentimentalist or a dreamer?

Were I privileged to address Mr. Lewes, and were it wise or becoming to say to him exactly what one thinks, I should utter words to this effect—

'You have a sound, clear judgment as far as it goes, but I

conceive it to be limited; your standard of talent is high, but I cannot acknowledge it to be the highest; you are deserving of all attention when you lay down the law on principles, but you are to be resisted when you dogmatise on feelings.

'To a certain point, Mr. Lewes, you can go, but no farther. Be as sceptical as you please on whatever lies beyond a certain intellectual limit; the mystery will never be cleared up to you, for that limit you will never overpass. Not all your learning, not all your reading, not all your sagacity, not all your perseverance can help you over one viewless line—one boundary as impassable as it is invisible. To enter that sphere a man must be born within it; and untaught peasants have there drawn their first breath, while learned philosophers have striven hard till old age to reach it, and have never succeeded.' I should not dare, nor would it be right, to say this to Mr. Lewes, but I cannot help thinking it both of him and many others who have a great name in the world.

Hester Mason's character, career, and fate appeared to me so strange, grovelling, and miserable, that I never for a moment doubted the whole dreary picture was from the life. I thought in describing the 'rustic poetess,' in giving the details of her vulgar provincial and disreputable metropolitan notoriety, and especially in touching on the ghastly catastrophe of her fate, he was faithfully recording facts—thus, however repulsively, yet conscientiously 'pointing a moral,' if not 'adorning a tale'; but if Hester be the daughter of Lewes's imagination, and if her experience and her doom be inventions of his fancy, I wish him better, and higher, and truer taste next time he writes a novel.

Julius's exploit with the side of bacon is not defensible; he might certainly, for the fee of a shilling or sixpence, have got a boy to carry it for him.

Captain Heath, too, must have cut a deplorable figure behind the post-chaise.

Mrs. Vyner strikes one as a portrait from the life; and it equally strikes one that the artist hated his original model with a personal hatred. She is made so bad that one cannot in the least degree sympathise with any of those who love her; one can only despise them. She is a fiend, and therefore not like Mr. Thackeray's Rebecca, where neither vanity, heartlessness, nor falsehood have been spared by the vigorous and skilful hand which portrays them, but where the human being has been pre-

served nevertheless, and where, consequently, the lesson given is infinitely more impressive. We can learn little from the strange fantasies of demons—we are not of their kind; but the vices of the deceitful, selfish man or woman humble and warn us. In your remarks on the good girls I concur to the letter; and I must add that I think Blanche, amiable as she is represented, could never have loved her husband after she had discovered that he was utterly despicable. Love is stronger than Cruelty, stronger than Death, but perishes under Meanness; Pity may take its place, but Pity is not Love.

So far, then, I not only agree with you, but I marvel at the nice perception with which you have discriminated, and at the accuracy with which you have marked each coarse, cold, improbable, unseemly defect. But now I am going to take another side: I am going to differ from you, and it is about Cecil Chamberlayne.

You say that no man who had intellect enough to paint a picture, or write a comic opera, could act as he did; you say that men of genius and talent may have egregious faults, but they cannot descend to brutality or meanness. Would that the case were so! Would that intellect could preserve from low vice! But, alas! it cannot. No, the whole character of Cecil is painted with but too faithful a hand; it is very masterly, because it is very true. Lewes is nobly right when he says that intellect is *not* the highest faculty of man, though it may be the most brilliant; when he declares that the *moral* nature of his kind is more sacred than the *intellectual* nature; when he prefers 'goodness, lovingness, and quiet self-sacrifice to all the talents in the world.'

There is something divine in the thought that genius preserves from degradation, were it but true; but Savage tells us it was not true for him; Sheridan confirms the avowal, and Byron seals it with terrible proof.

You never probably knew a Cecil Chamberlayne. If you had known such a one you would feel that Lewes has rather subdued the picture than overcharged it; you would know that mental gifts without moral firmness, without a clear sense of right and wrong, without the honourable principle which makes a man rather proud than ashamed of honest labour, are no guarantee from even deepest baseness.

I have received the *Dublin University Magazine*. The notice

is more favourable than I had anticipated: indeed, I had for a long time ceased to anticipate any from that quarter; but the critic does not strike one as too bright. Poor Mr. James is severely handled; *you*, likewise, are hard upon him. He always strikes me as a miracle of productiveness.

I must conclude by thanking you for your last letter, which both pleased and instructed me. You are quite right in thinking it exhibits the writer's character. Yes, it exhibits it *unmistakably* (as Lewes would say). And whenever it shall be my lot to submit another MS. to your inspection, I shall crave the full benefit of certain points in that character: I shall ever entreat my *first critic* to be as impartial as he is friendly; what he feels to be out of taste in my writings, I hope he will unsparingly condemn. In the excitement of composition, one is apt to fall into errors that one regrets afterwards, and we never feel our own faults so keenly as when we see them exaggerated in others.

I conclude in haste, for I have written too long a letter; but it is because there was much to answer in yours. It interested me. I could not help wishing to tell you how nearly I agreed with you.—Believe me, yours sincerely, C. BELL.

Letter 287

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

May 3rd, 1848.

DEAR ELLEN,—All I can say to you about a certain matter is this: the report—if report there be—and if the lady, who seems to have been rather mystified, had not dreamt what she fancied had been told to her—must have had its origin in some absurd misunderstanding. I have given *no one* a right either to affirm, or hint, in the most distant manner, that I am 'publishing'—(humbug!) Whoever has said it—if any one has, which I doubt—is no friend of mine. Though twenty books were ascribed to me, I should own none. I scout the idea utterly. Whoever, after I have distinctly rejected the charge, urges it upon me, will do an unkind and an ill-bred thing. The most profound obscurity is infinitely preferable to vulgar notoriety; and that notoriety I neither seek nor will have. If then any Birstallian or Gomersallian should presume to bore you on the subject,—to ask you what 'novel' Miss Brontë has been 'publishing,'—you can just say, with the distinct firmness of which you are perfect mistress, when

you choose, that you are authorised by Miss Brontë to say, that she repels and disowns every accusation of the kind. You may add, if you please, that if any one has her confidence, you believe you have, and she has made no drivelling confessions to you on the subject. I am not absolutely at a loss to conjecture from what source this rumour has come; and I fear it has far from a friendly origin. I am not certain, however, and I should be very glad if I could gain certainty. Should you hear anything more, let me know it. I was astonished to hear of Miss Dixon being likely to go to the West Indies; probably this too is only rumour. Your offer of Simeon's *Life* is a very kind one, and I thank you for it. I dare say papa would like to see the work very much, as he knew Mr. Simeon. Laugh or scold Ann out of the publishing notion; and believe me through all chances and changes, whether calumniated or let alone,—Yours faithfully,

C. Brontë.

Letter 288

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

May 12th, 1848.

My dear Sir,—I take a large sheet of paper, because I foresee that I am about to write another long letter, and for the same reason as before, viz., that yours interested me.

I have received the *Morning Chronicle*, and was both surprised and pleased to see the passage you speak of in one of its leading articles. An allusion of that sort seems to say more than a regular notice. I *do* trust I may have the power so to write in future as not to disappoint those who have been kind enough to think and speak well of *Jane Eyre*; at any rate, I will take pains. But still, whenever I hear my one book praised, the pleasure I feel is chastened by a mixture of doubt and fear; and, in truth, I hardly wish it to be otherwise: it is much too early for me to feel safe, or to take as my due the commendation bestowed.

Some remarks in your last letter on teaching commanded my attention. I suppose you never were engaged in tuition yourself; but if you had been, you could not have more exactly hit on the great qualification—I had almost said the *one* qualification—necessary to the task: the faculty, not merely of *acquiring* but of imparting knowledge—the power of influencing young minds—that natural fondness for, that innate sympathy with, children,

which, you say, Mrs. Williams is so happy as to possess. He or she who possesses this faculty, this sympathy—though perhaps not otherwise highly accomplished—need never fear failure in the career of instruction. Children will be docile with them, will improve under them; parents will consequently repose in them confidence. Their task will be comparatively light, their path comparatively smooth. If the faculty be absent, the life of a teacher will be a struggle from beginning to end. No matter how amiable the disposition, how strong the sense of duty, how active the desire to please; no matter how brilliant and varied the accomplishments; if the governess has not the power to win her young charge, the secret to instil gently and surely her own knowledge into the growing mind intrusted to her, she will have a wearing, wasting existence of it. To *educate* a child, as I dare say Mrs. Williams has educated her children, probably with as much pleasure to herself as profit to them, will indeed be impossible to the teacher who lacks this qualification. But, I conceive, should circumstances—as in the case of your daughters—compel a young girl notwithstanding to adopt a governess's profession, she may contrive to *instruct* and even to instruct well. That is, though she cannot form the child's mind, mould its character, influence its disposition, and guide its conduct as she would wish, she may give lessons—even, good, clear, clever lessons in the various branches of knowledge. She may earn and doubly earn her scanty salary as a daily governess. As a school-teacher she may succeed; but as a resident governess she will never (except under peculiar and exceptional circumstances) be happy. Her deficiency will harass her not so much in school-time as in play-hours; the moments that would be rest and recreation to the governess who understood and could adapt herself to children, will be almost torture to her who has not that power. Many a time, when her charge turns unruly on her hands, when the responsibility which she would wish to discharge faithfully and perfectly, becomes unmanageable to her, she will wish herself a housemaid or kitchen girl, rather than a baited, trampled, desolate, distracted governess.

The Governesses' Institution may be an excellent thing in some points of view, but it is both absurd and cruel to attempt to raise still higher the standard of acquirements. Already governesses are not half nor a quarter paid for what they teach, nor in most instances is half or a quarter of their attainments required by

their pupils. The young teacher's chief anxiety, when she sets out in life, always is to know a great deal; her chief fear that she should not know enough. Brief experience will, in most instances, show her that this anxiety has been misdirected. She will rarely be found too ignorant for her pupils; the demand on her knowledge will not often be larger than she can answer. But on her patience—on her self-control, the requirement will be enormous; on her animal spirits (and woe be to her if these fail!) the pressure will be immense.

I have seen an ignorant nursery-maid who could scarcely read or write, by dint of an excellent, serviceable, sanguine, phlegmatic temperament, which made her at once cheerful and unmovable; of a robust constitution and steady, unimpassionable nerves, which kept her firm under shocks and unharassed under annoyances—manage with comparative ease a large family of spoilt children, while their governess lived amongst them a life of inexpressible misery: tyrannised over, finding her efforts to please and teach utterly vain, chagrined, distressed, worried—so badgered, so trodden on, that she ceased almost at last to know herself, and wondered in what despicable, trembling frame her oppressed mind was prisoned, and could not realise the idea of ever being treated with respect and regarded with affection—till she finally resigned her situation and went away quite broken in spirit and reduced to the verge of decline in health.

Those who would urge on governesses more acquirements, do not know the origin of their chief sufferings. It is more physical and mental strength, denser moral impassibility that they require, rather than additional skill in arts or sciences. As to the forcing system, whether applied to teachers or taught, I hold it to be a cruel system.

It is true the world demands a brilliant list of accomplishments. For £20 per annum, it expects in one woman the attainments of several professors—but the demand is insensate, and I think should rather be resisted than complied with. If I might plead with you in behalf of your daughters, I should say, 'Do not let them waste their young lives in trying to attain manifold accomplishments. Let them try rather to possess thoroughly, fully, one or two talents; then let them endeavour to lay in a stock of health, strength, cheerfulness. Let them labour to attain self-control, endurance, fortitude, firmness; if possible, let them learn from their mother something of the precious art she possesses

—these things, together with sound principles, will be their best supports, their best aids through a governess's life.

As for that one who, you say, has a nervous horror of exhibition, I need not beg you to be gentle with her; I am sure you will not be harsh, but she must be firm with herself, or she will repent it in after life. She should begin by degrees to endeavour to overcome her diffidence. Were she destined to enjoy an independent, easy existence, she might respect her natural disposition to seek retirement, and even cherish it as a shade-loving virtue; but since that is not her lot, since she is fated to make her way in the crowd, and to depend on herself, she should say: I will try and learn the art of self-possession, not that I may display my accomplishments, but that I may have the satisfaction of feeling that I am my own mistress, and can move and speak undaunted by the fear of man. While, however, I pen this piece of advice, I confess that it is much easier to give than to follow. What the sensations of the nervous are under the gaze of publicity none but the nervous know; and how powerless reason and resolution are to control them would sound incredible except to the actual sufferers.

The rumours you mention respecting the authorship of *Jane Eyre* amused me inexpressibly. The gossips are, on this subject, just where I should wish them to be, *i.e.* as far from the truth as possible; and as they have not a grain of fact to found their fictions upon, they fabricate pure inventions. Judge Erle must, I think, have made up his story expressly for a hoax; the other *fib* is amazing—so circumstantial! called on the author, forsooth! Where did he live, I wonder? In what purlieu of Cockayne? Here I must stop, lest if I run on further I should fill another sheet.—Believe me, yours sincerely, CURRER BELL.

P.S.—I must, after all, add a morsel of paper, for I find, on glancing over yours, that I have forgotten to answer a question you ask respecting my next work. I have not therein so far treated of governesses, as I do not wish it to resemble its predecessor. I often wish to say something about the 'condition of women' question, but it is one respecting which so much 'cant' has been talked, that one feels a sort of repugnance to approach it. It is true enough that the present market for female labour is quite overstocked, but where or how could another be opened? Many say that the professions now filled only by men should be

open to women also; but are not their present occupants and candidates more than numerous enough to answer every demand? Is there any room for female lawyers, female doctors, female engravers, for more female artists, more authoresses? One can see where the evil lies, but who can point out the remedy? When a woman has a little family to rear and educate and a household to conduct, her hands are full, her vocation is evident; when her destiny isolates her, I suppose she must do what she can, live as she can, complain as little, bear as much, work as well as possible. This is not high theory, but I believe it is sound practice, good to put into execution while philosophers and legislators ponder over the better ordering of the social system. At the same time, I conceive that when patience has done its utmost and industry its best, whether in the case of women or operatives, and when both are baffled, and pain and want triumph, the sufferer is free, is entitled, at last to send up to Heaven any piercing cry for relief, if by that cry he can hope to obtain succour. C. BELL.

Letter 289

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

May 24th, '48.

DEAR ELLEN,—I shall begin by telling you that you have no right to be angry at the length of time I have suffered to slip by, since receiving your last, without answering it; because you have often kept me waiting much longer; and having made this gracious speech, thereby obviating reproaches, I will add that I think it a great shame when you receive a long and thoroughly interesting letter, full of the sort of details you fully relish, to read the same with selfish pleasure and not even have the manners to thank your correspondent, and express how much you enjoyed the narrative. I *did* enjoy the narrative in your last very keenly; the exquisitely characteristic traits concerning the Brooks were worth gold; just like not only them but all their class, respectable, well-meaning people enough; but with all that petty assumption of dignity, that small jealousy of senseless formalities which to such people seems to form a second religion. Your position amongst them was detestable. I admire the philosophy with which you bore it. Their taking offence because you stayed all night at their aunt's is rich. Which of the Miss Woolers did you see at Mr. Allbutt's. It is right not to think much of casual

attentions, it is quite justifiable also to derive from them temporary gratification, insomuch as they prove that their object has the power of pleasing. Let them be as ephemera—to last an hour, and not be regretted when gone. Write to me again soon, and believe me,—Yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

Letter 290

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

June 2, 1848.

MY DEAR SIR,—I snatch a moment to write a hasty line to you, for it makes me uneasy to think that your last kind letter should have remained so long unanswered. A succession of little engagements, much more importunate than important, have quite engrossed my time lately, to the exclusion of more momentous and interesting occupations. Interruption is a sad bore, and I believe there is hardly a spot on earth, certainly not in England, quite secure from its intrusion. The fact is, you cannot live in this world entirely for one aim; you must take along with some single serious purpose a hundred little minor duties, cares, distractions; in short, you must take life as it is, and make the best of it. Summer is decidedly a bad season for application, especially in the country; for the sunshine seems to set all your acquaintances astir, and, once bent on amusement, they will come to the ends of the earth in search thereof. I was obliged to you for your suggestion about writing a letter to the *Morning Chronicle*, but I did not follow it up. I think I would rather not venture on such a step at present. Opinions I would not hesitate to express to you—because you are indulgent—are not mature or cool enough for the public; Currer Bell is not Carlyle, and must not imitate him.

Whenever you can write to me without encroaching too much on your valuable time, remember I shall always be glad to hear from you. Your last letter interested me fully as much as its two predecessors; what you said about your family pleased me; I think details of character always have a charm even when they relate to people we have never seen, nor expect to see. With eight children you must have a busy life; but, from the manner in which you allude to your two eldest daughters, it is evident that they at least are a source of satisfaction to their parents; I

hope this will be the case with the whole number, and then you will never feel as if you had too many. A dozen children with sense and good conduct may be less burdensome than one who lacks these qualities. It seems a long time since I heard from you. I shall be glad to hear from you again.—Believe me, yours sincerely, C. BELL.

Letter 291

TO SUSEY ——[1]

HAWORTH, *June* 3, 1848.

MY DEAR SUSEY,—I was very glad to receive your note, especially as it informed me you were quite well. I was afraid that at the first you would not feel very comfortable among strangers; persons who have lived most of their lives in a quiet little place like Haworth find a great difference when they go to a fresh neighbourhood and enter the society of strangers. The change will, however, do you good, though it be but for a short time; I thought when you left you would be absent six months at the least, and was much surprised to learn that you would scarcely stay at York as many weeks. You cannot make all the improvement that could be wished in so short a time, but, from what I know of you, I am convinced that you will make the most of your opportunities.

Meantime, if ever you feel troubled about anything, you will not forget who is your best Help and Guide in every difficulty, and, separated as you are for a little while from your earthly friends, you will humbly and faithfully entreat the protection of your Friend and Father which is in Heaven. With best wishes for your welfare, believe me, my dear Susey, yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

Letter 292

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

HAWORTH, *June* 15*th*, 1848.

MY DEAR SIR,—Thank you for your two last letters. In reading the first I quite realised your May holiday; I enjoyed

[1] Name unknown. Evidently a pupil from her Sunday-school class who had gone out as a servant.

it with you. I saw the pretty south-of-England village, so different from our northern congregations of smoke-dark houses clustered round their soot-vomiting mills. I saw, in your description, fertile, flowery Essex—a contrast indeed to the rough and rude, the mute and sombre yet well-beloved moors overspreading this corner of Yorkshire. I saw the white school-house, the venerable schoolmaster—I even thought I saw you and your daughters; and in your second letter I see you all distinctly, for in describing your children you unconsciously describe yourself.

I may well say that your letters are of value to me, for I seldom receive one but I find something in it which makes me reflect, and reflect on new themes. Your town life is somewhat different from any I have known, and your allusions to its advantages, troubles, pleasures, and struggles are often full of significance to me.

I have always been accustomed to think that the necessity of earning one's subsistence is not in itself an evil, but I feel it may become a heavy evil if health fails, if employment lacks, if the demand upon our efforts made by the weakness of others dependent upon us becomes greater than our strength suffices to answer. In such a case I can imagine that the married man may wish himself single again, and that the married woman, when she sees her husband over-exerting himself to maintain her and her children, may almost wish—out of the very force of her affection for him—that it had never been her lot to add to the weight of his responsibilities. Most desirable then is it that all, both men and women, should have the power and the will to work for themselves—most advisable that both sons and daughters should early be inured to habits of independence and industry. Birds teach their nestlings to fly as soon as their wings are strong enough, they even oblige them to quit the nest if they seem too unwilling to trust their pinions of their own accord. Do not the swallow and the starling thus give a lesson by which man might profit?

It seems to me that your kind heart is pained by the thought of what your daughter may suffer if transplanted from a free and indulged home existence to a life of constraint and labour amongst strangers. Suffer she probably will; but take both comfort and courage, my dear sir, try to soothe your anxiety by this thought, which is not a fallacious one. Hers will not be a barren suffering; she will gain by it largely; she will 'sow in

tears to reap in joy.' A governess's experience is frequently indeed bitter, but its results are precious: the mind, feeling, temper are there subjected to a discipline equally painful and priceless. I have known many who were unhappy as governesses, but not one who regretted having undergone the ordeal, and scarcely one whose character was not improved — at once strengthened and purified, fortified and softened, made more enduring for her own afflictions, more considerate for the afflictions of others, by passing through it.

Should your daughter, however, go out as governess, she should first take a firm resolution not to be too soon daunted by difficulties, too soon disgusted by disagreeables; and if she has a high spirit, sensitive feelings, she should tutor the one to submit, the other to endure, *for the sake of those at home.* That is the governess's best talisman of patience, it is the best balm for wounded susceptibility. When tried hard she must say, 'I will be patient, not out of servility, but because I love my parents, and wish through my perseverance, diligence, and success, to repay their anxieties and tenderness for me.' With this aid the least-deserved insult may often be swallowed quite calmly, like a bitter pill with a draught of fair water.

I think you speak excellent sense when you say that girls without fortune should be brought up and accustomed to support themselves; and that if they marry poor men, it should be with a prospect of being able to help their partners. If all parents thought so, girls would not be reared on speculation with a view to their making mercenary marriages; and, consequently, women would not be so piteously degraded as they now too often are.

Fortuneless people may certainly marry, provided they previously resolve never to let the consequences of their marriage throw them as burdens on the hands of their relatives. But as life is full of unforeseen contingencies, and as a woman may be so placed that she cannot possibly both 'guide the house' and earn her livelihood (what leisure, for instance, could Mrs. Williams have with her eight children?), young artists and young governesses should think twice before they unite their destinies.

You speak sense again when you express a wish that Fanny were placed in a position where active duties would engage her attention, where her faculties would be exercised and her mind occupied, and where, I will add, not doubting that my addition

merely completes your half-approved idea, the image of the young artist would for the present recede into the background and remain for a few years to come in modest perspective, the finishing point of a vista stretching a considerable distance into futurity. Fanny may feel sure of this: if she intends to be an artist's wife she had better try an apprenticeship with Fortune as a governess first; she cannot undergo a better preparation for that honourable (honourable if rightly considered) but certainly not luxurious destiny.

I should say then—judging as well as I can from the materials for forming an opinion your letter affords, and from what I can thence conjecture of Fanny's actual and prospective position—that you would do well and wisely to put your daughter out. The experiment might do good and could not do harm, because even if she failed at the first trial (which is not unlikely) she would still be in some measure benefited by the effort.

I duly received *Mirabeau* from Mr. Smith. I must repeat, it is really *too* kind. When I have read the book, I will tell you what I think of it—its subject is interesting. One thing a little annoyed me—as I glanced over the pages I fancied I detected a savour of Carlyle's peculiarities of style. Now Carlyle is a great man, but I always wish he would write plain English; and to imitate his Germanisms is, I think, to imitate his faults. Is the author of this work a Manchester man? I must not ask his name, I suppose.—Believe me, my dear sir, yours sincerely,

CURRER BELL.

Letter 293

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

June 22nd, 1848.

MY DEAR SIR,—After reading a book which has both interested and informed you, you like to be able, on laying it down, to speak of it with unqualified approbation—to praise it cordially; you do not like to stint your panegyric, to counteract its effect with blame.

For this reason I feel a little difficulty in telling you what I think of *The Life of Mirabeau*. It has interested me much, and I have derived from it additional information. In the course of reading it, I have often felt called upon to approve the ability and

tact of the writer, to admire the skill with which he conducts the narrative, enchains the reader's attention, and keeps it fixed upon his hero; but I have also been moved frequently to disapprobation. It is not the political principles of the writer with which I find fault, nor is it his talents I feel inclined to disparage; to speak truth, it is his manner of treating Mirabeau's errors that offends—then, I think, he is neither wise nor right—there, I think, he betrays a little of crudeness, a little of presumption, not a little of indiscretion.

Could you with confidence put this work into the hands of your son, secure that its perusal would not harm him, that it would not leave on his mind some vague impression that there is a grandeur in vice committed on a colossal scale? Whereas, the fact is, that in vice there is no grandeur, that it is, on whichever side you view it, and in whatever accumulation, only a foul, sordid, and degrading thing. The fact is, that this great Mirabeau was a mixture of divinity and dirt; that there was no divinity whatever in his errors, they were all sullying dirt; that they ruined him, brought down his genius to the kennel, deadened his fine nature and generous sentiments, made all his greatness as nothing; that they cut him off in his prime, obviated all his aims, and struck him dead in the hour when France most needed him.

Mirabeau's life and fate teach, to my perception, the most depressing lesson I have read for years. One would fain have hoped that so many noble qualities *must* have made a noble character and achieved noble ends. No—the mighty genius lived a miserable and degraded life, and died a dog's death, for want of self-control, for want of morality, for lack of religion. One's heart is wrung for Mirabeau after reading his life; and it is not of his greatness we think, when we close the volume, so much as of his hopeless recklessness, and of the sufferings, degradation, and untimely end in which it issued. It appears to me that the biographer errs also in being too solicitous to present his hero always in a striking point of view—too negligent of the exact truth. He eulogises him too much; he subdues all the other characters mentioned and keeps them in the shade that Mirabeau may stand out more conspicuously. This, no doubt, is right in art, and admissible in fiction; but in history (and biography is the history of an individual) it tends to weaken the force of a narrative by weakening your faith in its accuracy.

C. BELL.

Letter 294

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *June 26th*, '48.

DEAR ELLEN,—I should have answered your last long ago if I had known your address, but you omitted to give it me, and I have been waiting in the hope that you would perhaps write again and repair the omission. Finding myself deceived in this expectation, however, I have at last hit on the plan of sending the letter to Brookroyd to be directed; be sure to give me your address when you reply to this.

I was glad to hear that you were well received at London, and that you got safe to the end of your journey. Your *naïveté* in gravely inquiring my opinion of the 'last new novel' amuses me; we do not subscribe to a circulating library at Haworth, and consequently 'new novels' rarely indeed come in our way, and consequently again, we are not qualified to give opinions thereon.

About three weeks ago I received a brief note from Hunsworth, to the effect that Mr. Joe Taylor and his cousin Henry would make some inquiries respecting Mde. Héger's school on account of Ellen Taylor, and that if I had no objection, they would ride over to Haworth in a day or two. I said they might come if they would. They came, accompanied by Miss Mossman, of Bradford, whom I had never seen, only heard of occasionally. It was a pouring wet and windy day; we had quite ceased to expect them. Miss Mossman was quite wet, and we had to make her change her things, and dress her out in ours as well as we could. I do not know if you are acquainted with her; I thought her unaffected and rather agreeable looking, though she has very red hair. Henry Taylor does indeed resemble John most strongly. Joe looked thin, he was in good spirits, and I think in tolerably good-humour. I would have given much for you to have been there. I had not been very well for some days before, and had some difficulty in keeping up the talk, but I managed on the whole better than I expected. I was glad Miss Mossman came, for she helped. Nothing new was communicated respecting Mary. Nothing of importance in any way was said the whole time; it was all rattle, rattle, of which I should have great difficulty now in recalling the substance. They left almost immediately after tea. I have not heard a word respecting them

since, but I suppose they got home all right. The visit strikes me as an odd whim. I consider it quite a caprice, prompted probably by curiosity.

Joe Taylor mentioned that he had called at Brookroyd, and that Ann had told him you were ill, and going into the South for change of air.

I hope you will soon write to me again and tell me particularly how your health is, and how you get on. Give my regards to Mary Gorham, for really I have a sort of regard for her by hearsay, and believe me, dear Nell, yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË

Letter 295

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

July 4th, 1848.

DEAR ELLEN,—As far as I can understand your brother John's proposal, it seems to me very grasping; if it is so, you do right to resist it. Still you must consider well, lest unreflecting opposition should do incalculable mischief. As you say, your own actual present interest in the matter is small, and none can read the future, none can say because I am younger than this man or woman I shall live longer than he. Your brother, of course, does not mean to say that in case you should marry and have children of your own, you should not be at liberty to will anything you might have to them. Should this never happen, certainly his family are the nearest to you all: to them, whether bound to do so or not, you would naturally leave your property. It might under such circumstances be unwise to make a great sacrifice of present comfort and security for the sake of future possible contingencies. As to the principle of the matter, it is not a thing of which you are called upon to make a religion; it is sometimes more meritorious to yield our own rights than to cling to them too tenaciously, if yielding will add greatly to the comfort of others. But there may be sides of the question known to you, of which I am ignorant.

C. BRONTË.

CHAPTER XVII

MARY TAYLOR

THE reader will have discovered that one of the most attractive personalities in Charlotte Brontë's life was Miss Mary Taylor, the 'M——' of Mrs. Gaskell's biography and the Rose Yorke of *Shirley*.

Mary Taylor will always have a peculiar interest to those who care for the Brontës. She shrank from publicity, and her name has been less mentioned than that of any other member of the circle. And yet hers was a personality singularly strenuous and strong. She wrote two books 'with a purpose,' and, as we shall see, vigorously embodied her teaching in her life. It will be remembered that Charlotte Brontë, Ellen Nussey, and Mary Taylor first met at Roe Head School, when Charlotte was fifteen and her friends about fourteen years of age. Here are Miss Nussey's impressions:—

Ellen Nussey's Narrative.

She was pretty, and very childish-looking, dressed in a red-coloured frock with short sleeves and low neck, as then worn by young girls. Miss Wooler in later years used to say that when Mary went to her as a pupil she thought her too pretty to live. She was not talkative at school, but industrious, and always ready with lessons. She was always at the top in class lessons, with Charlotte Brontë and the writer; seldom a change was made, and then only with the three—one move. Charlotte and she were great friends for a time, but there was no withdrawing from me on either side, and Charlotte never quite knew how an estrangement arose with Mary, but it lasted a long time. Then a time came that both Charlotte and Mary were so proficient in schoolroom attainments there was no more for them to learn, and Miss Wooler

set them Blair's *Belles Lettres* to commit to memory. We all laughed at their studies. Charlotte persevered, but Mary took her own line, flatly refused, and accepted the penalty of disobedience, going supperless to bed for about a month before she left school. When it was moonlight, we always found her engaged in drawing on the chest of drawers, which stood in the bay window, quite happy and cheerful. Her rebellion was never outspoken. She was always quiet in demeanour. Her sister Martha, on the contrary, spoke out vigorously, daring Miss Wooler so much, face to face, that she sometimes received a box on the ear, which hardly any saint could have withheld. Then Martha would expatiate on the danger of boxing ears, quoting a reverend brother of Miss Wooler's. Among her school companions, Martha was called 'Miss Boisterous,' but was always a favourite, so piquant and fascinating were her ways. She was not in the least pretty, but something much better, full of change and variety, rudely outspoken, lively, and original, producing laughter with her own good-humour and affection. She was her father's pet child. He delighted in hearing her sing, telling her to go the piano, with his affectionate 'Patty lass.'

Mary never had the impromptu vivacity of her sister, but was lively in games that engaged her mind. Her music was very correct, but entirely cultivated by practice and perseverance. Anything underhand was detestable to both Mary and Martha; they had no mean pride towards others, but accepted the incidents of life with imperturbable good-sense and insight. They were not dressed as well as other pupils, for economy at that time was the rule of their household. The girls had to stitch all over their new gloves before wearing them, by order of their mother, to make them wear longer. Their dark blue cloth coats were worn when *too short*, and black beaver bonnets quite plainly trimmed, with the ease and contentment of a fashionable costume. Mr. Taylor was a banker as well as a monopolist of army cloth manufacture in the district. He lost money, and gave up banking. He set his mind on paying all creditors, and effected this during his lifetime as far as possible, willing that his sons were to do the remainder, which two of his sons carried out, as was understood, during their lifetime —Mark and Martin of *Shirley*.'

Let us now read Charlotte's description in *Shirley*, and I think we have a tolerably fair estimate of the sisters.

The two next are girls, Rose and Jessie; they are both now at their father's knee; they seldom go near their mother, except when obliged to do so. Rose, the elder, is twelve years old; she is like her father—the most like him of the whole group—but it is a granite head copied in ivory; all is softened in colour and line. Yorke himself has a harsh face; his daughter's is not harsh, neither is it quite pretty; it is simple—childlike in feature; the round cheeks bloom; as to the grey eyes, they are otherwise than childlike—a serious soul lights them—a young soul yet, but it will mature, if the body lives; and neither father nor mother has a spirit to compare with it. Partaking of the essence of each, it will one day be better than either—stronger, much purer, more aspiring. Rose is a still, and sometimes a stubborn girl now; her mother wants to make of her such a woman as she is herself—a woman of dark and dreary duties; and Rose has a mind full-set, thick-sown with the germs of ideas her mother never knew. It is agony to her often to have these ideas trampled on and repressed. She has never rebelled yet; but if hard driven, she will rebel one day, and then it will be once for all. Rose loves her father; her father does not rule her with a rod of iron; he is good to her. He sometimes fears she will not live, so bright are the sparks of intelligence which, at moments, flash from her glance and gleam in her language. This idea makes him often sadly tender to her.

He has no idea that little Jessie will die young, she is so gay and chattering, arch—original even now; passionate when provoked, but most affectionate if caressed; by turns gentle and rattling; exacting yet generous; fearless—of her mother, for instance, whose irrationally hard and strict rule she has often defied—yet reliant on any who will help her. Jessie, with her little piquant face, engaging prattle, and winning ways, is made to be a pet; and her father's pet she accordingly is.

Mary Taylor was called 'Pag' by her friends and sometimes 'Polly.' In a letter we have read,[1] reference is made to her father's death. He was the Mr. Yorke of Briarmains in *Shirley*. Soon after that event Mary began to talk of going to New Zealand, but four years were to pass ere she carried out her plan. Instead she went to Brussels, which, as we have seen, was the direct cause of

[1] Jan. 31, 1841.

Charlotte and Emily establishing themselves at the Pensionnat Héger. In Brussels Martha Taylor died.

It was while Charlotte was making her second stay in Brussels that she heard of Mary's determination to go with her brother Waring to New Zealand, with a view to earning her own living in any reasonable manner that might offer.

Here she was joined by her cousin Ellen Taylor, and it was from Wellington that she wrote the many interesting letters that I have been permitted by her executors to publish. Her letter on receipt of a copy of *Jane Eyre* is particularly noteworthy.

Letter 296

TO CHARLOTTE BRONTË

WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND,
July 24th, 1848.

DEAR CHARLOTTE,—About a month since I received and read *Jane Eyre*. It seemed to me incredible that you had actually written a book. Such events did not happen while I was in England. I begin to believe in your existence much as I do in Mr. Rochester's. In a believing mood I don't doubt either of them. After I had read it I went on to the top of Mount Victoria and looked for a ship to carry a letter to you. There was a little thing with one mast, and also H.M.S. *Fly*, and nothing else. If a cattle vessel came from Sydney she would probably return in a few days, and would take a mail, but we have had east wind for a month and nothing can come in.

Aug. 1.—The *Harlequin* has just come from Otago, and is to sail for Singapore *when the wind changes*, and by that route (which I hope to take myself sometime) I send you this. Much good may it do you. Your novel surprised me by being so perfect as a work of art. I expected something more changeable and unfinished. You have polished to some purpose. If I were to do so I should get tired, and weary every one else in about two pages. No sign of this weariness in your book—you must have had abundance, having kept it all to yourself!

You are very different from me in having no doctrine to preach. It is impossible to squeeze a moral out of your production. Has the world gone so well with you that you have no protest to make against its absurdities? Did you never sneer or declaim in your first sketches? I will scold you well when I see you. I do not believe in Mr. Rivers. There are no *good* men of the Rivers species. A missionary either goes into his office for a piece of bread, or he goes from enthusiasm, and that is both too good and too bad a quality for St. John. It's a bit of your absurd charity to believe in such a man. You have done wisely in choosing to imagine a high class of readers. You never stop to explain or defend anything, and never seem bothered with the idea—'If Mrs. Fairfax or any other well-intentioned fool gets hold of this, what will she think?' And yet, you know, the world is made up of such, and worse. Once more, how have you written through three volumes without declaring war to the knife against a few dozen absurd doctrines, each of which is supported by 'a large and respectable class of readers'? Emily seems to have such a class in her eye when she wrote that strange thing *Wuthering Heights.* Anne, too, stops repeatedly to preach commonplace truths. She has had a still lower class in her mind's eye. Emily seems to have followed the bookseller's advice. As to the price you got, it was certainly Jewish. But what could the people do? If they had asked you to fix it, do you know yourself how many ciphers your sum would have had? And how should they know better? And if they did, that's the knowledge they get their living by. If I were in your place, the idea of being bound in the sale of two more would prevent me from ever writing again. Yet you are probably now busy with another. It is curious to me to see among the old letters one from Sarah sending a *copy of á whole article* on the currency question written by Fonblanque! I exceedingly regret having burnt your letters in a fit of caution, and I've forgotten all the names. Was the reader Albert Smith? What do they think of you? I perceive I've betrayed my habit of writing only on one side of the paper. Go on to the next page.

I mention the book to no one and hear no opinions. I lend it a good deal because it's a novel, and *it's as good as another*! They say 'it makes them cry.' They are not literary enough to give an opinion. If ever I hear one I'll embalm it for you. As to my own affair, I have written 100 pages, and lately 50

more. It's no use writing faster. I get so disgusted, I can do nothing. I have sent three or four things to Joe for Tait. Troup (Ed.) never acknowledges them, though he promised to pay or send them back. Joe sent one to *Chambers*, who thought it unsuitable, in which I agree with them.

I think I told you I built a house. I get 12s. a week for it. Moreover, in accordance with a late letter of John's, I borrow money from him and Joe and buy cattle with it. I have already spent £100 or so and intend to buy some more as soon as Waring can pay me the money—perhaps as much by degrees as £400 or £500. As I only pay 5 per cent. interest I expect [to] profit much by this, viz. about 30 per ct. a year, perhaps 40 or 50. Thus if I borrow £500 in two years' time (I cannot have it quicker) I shall perhaps make £250 to £300. I am pretty certain of being able to pay principal and interest. If I could command £300 and £50 a year, afterwards I would 'hallack'[1] about N.Z. for a twelvemonth, then go home by way of India, and write my travels, which would prepare the way for my novel. With the benefit of your experience I should perhaps make a better bargain than you. I am most afraid of my health. Not that I should die, but perhaps sink into a state of betweenity, neither well nor ill, in which I should observe nothing, and be very miserable besides. My life here is not disagreeable. I have a great resource in the piano, and a little employment in teaching. Then I go in to Mrs. Taylor's and astonish the poor girl with calling her favourite parson a *spoon*. She thinks I am astonishingly learned but rather wicked, and tries hard to persuade me to go to chapel, though I tell her I only go for amusement. She would have sense but for her wretched health, which is getting rapidly worse from her irrational mode of living.

I can hardly explain to you the queer feeling of living, as I do, in two places at once. One world containing books, England, and all the people with whom I can exchange an idea; the other all that I actually see and hear and speak to. The separation is as complete as between the things in a picture and the things in the room. The puzzle is that both move and act, and [I] must say my say as one of each. The result is that one world at least must think me crazy. I am just now in a sad mess. A drover, who has grown rich with cattle-dealing, wanted me to go and teach his daughter. As the man is a widower I

[1] To idle away time.

astonished *this* world when I accepted the proposal, and still more because I asked too high a price (£70) a year. Now that I have begun, the same people can't conceive why I don't go on and marry the man at once, which they imagine must have been my original intention. For my part I shall possibly astonish them a little more, for I feel a great inclination to make use of his interested civilities to visit his daughter and see the district of Porirua. If I had a little more money and could afford a horse (she rides), I certainly would. But I can see nothing till I get a horse, which I shall have if I 'm lucky in two or three years.

I have just made acquaintance with Dr. and Mrs. Logan. He is a retired navy doctor, and has more general knowledge than any one I have talked to here. For instance, he had heard of Philippe Égalité; of a camera-obscura; of the resemblance the English language has to the German, etc., etc. Mrs. Taylor, Miss Knox, and Mrs. Logan sat in mute admiration while he mentioned these things, being employed in the meantime in making a patchwork quilt. Did you never notice that the women of the middle classes are generally too ignorant to talk to? and that you are thrown entirely on the man for conversation? There is no such feminine inferiority in the lower. The women go hand in hand with the men in the degree of cultivation they are able to reach. I can talk very well to a joiner's wife, but seldom to a merchant's.

I must now tell you the fate of your cow. The creature gave so little milk that she is doomed to be fatted and killed. In about two months she will fetch perhaps £15, with which I shall buy three heifers. Thus you have the chance of getting a calf sometime. My own thrive well, and possibly I have a calf myself. Before this reaches England I shall have three or four.

It 's a pity you don't live in this world, that I might entertain you about the price of meat. Do you know, I bought six heifers the other day for £23, and now it is turned so cold I expect to hear one-half of them are dead. One man bought twenty sheep for £8, and they are all dead but one. Another bought 150 and has 40 left, and people have begun to drive cattle through a valley into the Wairau plains and thence across the straits to Wellington, etc., etc. This is the only legitimate subject of conversation we have, the rest is gossip concerning our superiors in station who don't know us on the road, but it is astonishing how

well we know all their private affairs, making allowance always for the distortion in our own organs of vision.

I have now told you everything I can think of except that the cat 's on the table and that I 'm going to borrow a new book to read—no less than an account of all the systems of philosophy of modern Europe. I have lately met with a wonder, a man who thinks Jane Eyre would have done better to marry Mr. Rivers! He gives no reason—such people never do.

MARY TAYLOR.

This brings me to a letter by Charlotte which throws a flood of light upon an event of July in this year that provided a moment of too wild excitement; for two of the three sisters, Charlotte and Anne, went up to London to see their publishers, who up to that time had no knowledge of their appearance, although they had long known the sex of 'Mr. Currer Bell.'

Letter 297

TO MARY TAYLOR

HAWORTH, *September 4th*, 1848.

DEAR POLLY,—I write you a great many more letters than you write me, though whether they all reach you, or not, Heaven knows! I dare say you will not be without a certain desire to know how our affairs get on; I will give you therefore a notion as briefly as may be. Acton Bell has published another book; it is in three volumes, but I do not like it quite so well as *Agnes Grey*—the subject not being such as the author had pleasure in handling; it has been praised by some reviews and blamed by others. As yet, only £25 have been realised for the copyright, and as Acton Bell's publisher is a shuffling scamp, I expected no more.

About two months since I had a letter from my publishers—Smith and Elder—saying that *Jane Eyre* had had a great run in America, and that a publisher there had consequently bid high for the first sheets of a new work by Currer Bell, which they had promised to let him have.

Presently after came another missive from Smith and Elder; their American correspondent had written to them complaining

that the first sheets of a new work by Currer Bell had been already received, and not by their house, but by a rival publisher, and asking the meaning of such false play; it enclosed an extract from a letter from Mr. Newby (A. and C. Bell's publisher) affirming that to the best of his belief *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, and *Agnes Grey*, and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (the new work) were all the production of one author.

This was a *lie*, as Newby had been told repeatedly that they were the production of three different authors, but the fact was he wanted to make a dishonest move in the game to make the public and the trade believe that he had got hold of Currer Bell, and thus cheat Smith and Elder by securing the American publisher's bid.

The upshot of it was that on the very day I received Smith and Elder's letter, Anne and I packed up a small box, sent it down to Keighley, set out ourselves after tea, walked through a snowstorm to the station, got to Leeds, and whirled up by the night train to London with the view of proving our separate identity to Smith and Elder, and confronting Newby with his *lie*.

We arrived at the Chapter Coffee-House[1] (our old place, Polly, we did not well know where else to go) about eight o'clock in the morning. We washed ourselves, had some breakfast, sat a few minutes, and then set off in queer inward excitement to 65 Cornhill. Neither Mr. Smith nor Mr. Williams knew we were coming—they had never seen us—they did not know whether we were men or women, but had always written to us as men.

We found 65 to be a large bookseller's shop, in a street almost as bustling as the Strand. We went in, walked up to the counter. There were a great many young men and lads here and there; I said to the first I could accost: 'May I see Mr. Smith?' He hesitated, looked a little surprised. We sat down and waited a while, looking at some books on the counter, publications of theirs well known to us, of many of which they had sent us copies as presents. At last we were shown up to Mr. Smith. 'Is it Mr. Smith?' I said, looking up through my spectacles at a tall young man. 'It is.' I then put his own letter into his hand directed to Currer Bell. He looked at it and then at me again. 'Where did you get this?' he said. I laughed at his perplexity—a recognition

[1] The Chapter Coffee-House at the west corner of Paul's Alley, Paternoster Row, 'was noted in the last century as the place of meeting of the London publishers' (Wheatley's *London*). It was destroyed in 1858.

took place. I gave my real name: Miss Brontë. We were in a small room—ceiled with a great skylight—and there explanations were rapidly gone into; Mr. Newby being anathematised, I fear, with undue vehemence. Mr. Smith hurried out and returned quickly with one whom he introduced as Mr. Williams, a pale, mild, stooping man of fifty, very much like a faded Tom Dixon. Another recognition and a long, nervous shaking of hands. Then followed talk—talk—talk; Mr. Williams being silent, Mr. Smith loquacious.

Mr. Smith said we must come and stay at his house, but we were not prepared for a long stay and declined this also; as we took our leave he told us he should bring his sisters to call on us that evening. We returned to our inn, and I paid for the excitement of the interview by a thundering headache and harassing sickness. Towards evening, as I got no better and expected the Smiths to call, I took a strong dose of sal-volatile. It roused me a little; still, I was in grievous bodily case when they were announced. They came in, two elegant young ladies, in full dress, prepared for the Opera—Mr. Smith himself in evening costume, white gloves, etc. We had by no means understood that it was settled we were to go to the Opera, and were not ready. Moreover, we had no fine, elegant dresses with us, or in the world. However, on brief rumination I thought it would be wise to make no objections—I put my headache in my pocket, we attired ourselves in the plain, high-made country garments we possessed, and went with them to their carriage, where we found Mr. Williams. They must have thought us queer, quizzical-looking beings, especially me with my spectacles. I smiled inwardly at the contrast, which must have been apparent, between me and Mr. Smith as I walked with him up the crimson-carpeted staircase of the Opera House and stood amongst a brilliant throng at the box door, which was not yet open. Fine ladies and gentlemen glanced at us with a slight, graceful superciliousness quite warranted by the circumstances. Still, I felt pleasantly excited in spite of headache and sickness and conscious clownishness, and I saw Anne was calm and gentle, which she always is.[1]

[1] They took the pseudonym of 'Brown' when introduced to Mr. Smith's friends. 'All this time,' says Mrs. Gaskell, 'those who came in contact with the "Miss Browns" seem only to have regarded them as shy and reserved little countrywomen, with not much to say.' Mr. Williams tells me that on the night when he accompanied the party to the Opera, as Charlotte ascended the flight of stairs leading from the grand entrance up to the lobby of the first tier of boxes, she was so much struck with the architectural

The performance was Rossini's opera of the *Barber of Seville*, very brilliant, though I fancy there are things I should like better. We got home after one o'clock; we had never been in bed the the night before, and had been in constant excitement for twenty-four hours. You may imagine we were tired.

The next day, Sunday, Mr. Williams came early and took us to church. He was so quiet, but so sincere in his attentions, one could not but have a most friendly leaning towards him. He has a nervous hesitation in speech, and a difficulty in finding appropriate language in which to express himself, which throws him into the background in conversation; but I had been his correspondent and therefore knew with what intelligence he could write, so that I was not in danger of undervaluing him. In the afternoon Mr. Smith came in his carriage with his mother, to take us to his house to dine. Mr. Smith's residence is at Bayswater, six miles from Cornhill; the rooms, the drawing-room especially, looked splendid to us. There was no company—only his mother, his two grown-up sisters, and his brother, a lad of twelve or thirteen, and a little sister, the youngest of the family, very like himself. They are all dark-eyed, dark-haired, and have clear, pale faces. The mother is a portly, handsome woman of her age, and all the children more or less well-looking—one of the daughters decidedly pretty. We had a fine dinner, which neither Anne nor I had appetite to eat, and were glad when it was over. I always feel under an awkward constraint at table. Dining out would be hideous to me.

Mr. Smith made himself very pleasant. He is a *practical* man. I wish Mr. Williams were more so, but he is altogether of the contemplative, theorising order. Mr. Williams has too many abstractions.

On Monday we went to the Exhibition of the Royal Academy and the National Gallery, dined again at Mr. Smith's, then went home with Mr. Williams to tea and saw his comparatively humble but neat residence and his fine family of eight children. A daughter of Leigh Hunt's was there. She sang some little Italian airs which she had picked up among the peasantry in Tuscany, in a manner that charmed me.

On Tuesday morning we left London laden with books which

effect of the splendid decorations of that vestibule and saloon, that involuntarily she slightly pressed his arm and whispered, 'You know I am not accustomed to this sort of thing.'

Mr. Smith had given us, and got safely home. A more jaded wretch than I looked when I returned it would be difficult to conceive. I was thin when I went, but was meagre indeed when I returned; my face looked grey and very old, with strange, deep lines ploughed in it; my eyes stared unnaturally. I was weak and yet restless. In a while, however, the bad effects of excitement went off and I regained my normal condition. We saw Mr. Newby, but of him more another time. Good-bye. God bless you. Write.
C. B.

Here we may return to the regular order of the correspondence, which fully explains itself.

Letter 298

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

CHAPTER COFFEE-HOUSE, IVY LANE,
July 8th, 1848.

MY DEAR SIR,—Your invitation is too welcome not to be at once accepted. I should much like to see Mrs. Williams and her children, and very much like to have a quiet chat with yourself. Would it suit you if we came to-morrow, after dinner—say about seven o'clock, and spent Sunday evening with you?

We shall be truly glad to see you whenever it is convenient to you to call.—I am, my dear sir, yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

Letter 299

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

HAWORTH, *July 13th*, 1848.

MY DEAR SIR,—We reached home safely yesterday, and in a day or two I doubt not we shall get the better of the fatigues of our journey.

It was a somewhat hasty step to hurry up to town as we did, but I do not regret having taken it. In the first place mystery is irksome, and I was glad to shake it off with you and Mr. Smith, and to show myself to you for what I am, neither more nor less—thus removing any false expectations that may have arisen under the idea that Currer Bell had a just claim to

the masculine cognomen he, perhaps somewhat presumptuously, adopted—that he was, in short, of the nobler sex.

I was glad also to see you and Mr. Smith, and am very happy now to have such pleasant recollections of you both, and of your respective families. My satisfaction would have been complete could I have seen Mrs. Williams. The appearance of your children tallied on the whole accurately with the description you had given of them. Fanny was the one I saw least distinctly; I tried to get a clear view of her countenance, but her position in the room did not favour my efforts.

I have just read your article in the *John Bull*; it very clearly and fully explains the cause of the difference obvious between ancient and modern paintings. I wish you had been with us when we went over the Exhibition and the National Gallery: a little explanation from a judge of art would doubtless have enabled us to understand better what we saw; perhaps, one day, we may have this pleasure.

Accept my own thanks and my sister's for your kind attention to us while in town, and—Believe me, yours sincerely,

CHARLOTTE BRONTË.

I trust Mrs. Williams is quite recovered from her indisposition.

Letter 300

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

July 28th, 1848.

DEAR ELLEN,—There were passages in your last letter which touched me, but I shall not dwell on them. I am writing now simply because I want to hear from you again, not because I have anything of the slightest interest to say. I observe in your letters you have not said much about Mary Gorham. I hope you find reason to like her as well as ever; and indeed I cannot doubt that this is the case, as from your account of her I should conjecture that she is not of those characters that deteriorate with time and experience, or even that change, except for the better. Perhaps the presence of the two other young ladies would, at first, keep you a little apart from her, but since you wrote last you will have been with her more alone, and can tell me more about her.

I should suppose the brothers, from what you say, are of the

better end of mankind; Mrs. Gorham I always stand a little in awe of; I fancy her somewhat cold and severe, even suspicious. I think I confuse her character with that of our old friend Mrs. Taylor; doubtless I do her great injustice. As to Mr. Gorham, he seems a nonentity to me; I dare say you may have described him to me at some time, but if so I have forgotten the very outlines of the portrait; you must sketch it again.

Anne continues to hear constantly, almost daily, from her old pupils, the Robinsons. They are both now engaged to different gentlemen, and if they do not change their minds, which they have done already two or three times, will probably be married in a few months. Not one spark of love does either of them profess for her future husband, one of them openly declares that interest alone guides her, and the other, poor thing! is acting according to her mother's wish, and is utterly indifferent herself to the man chosen for her. The lighter-headed of the two sisters takes a pleasure in the spectacle of her fine wedding-dresses and costly bridal presents; the more thoughtful can derive no gratification from these things and is much depressed at the contemplation of her future lot. Anne does her best to cheer and counsel her, and she seems to cling to her quiet, former governess, as her only true friend. Of their mother I have not patience to speak; a worse woman, I believe, hardly exists; the more I hear of her the more deeply she revolts me; but I do not like to talk about her in a letter.

Branwell is the same in conduct as ever; his constitution seems shattered. Papa, and sometimes all of us, have sad nights with him, he sleeps most of the day, and consequently will lie awake at night. But has not every house its trial?

Write to me very soon, dear Nell, and believe me, yours sincerely, C. BRONTË.

Letter 301

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

HAWORTH, *July* 31*st*, 1848.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have lately been reading *Modern Painters*, and I have derived from the work much genuine pleasure and, I hope, some edification; at any rate, it made me feel how ignorant I had previously been on the subject which it treats. Hitherto

I have only had instinct to guide me in judging of art; I feel more as if I had been walking blindfold—this book seems to give me eyes. I *do* wish I had pictures within reach by which to test the new sense. Who can read these glowing descriptions of Turner's works without longing to see them? However eloquent and convincing the language in which another's opinion is placed before you, you still wish to judge for yourself. I like this author's style much: there is both energy and beauty in it; I like himself too, because he is such a hearty admirer. He does not give Turner half-measure of praise or veneration, he eulogises, he reverences him (or rather his genius) with his whole soul. One can sympathise with that sort of devout, serious admiration (for he is no rhapsodist)—one can respect it; and yet possibly many people would laugh at it. I am truly obliged to Mr. Smith for giving me this book, not having often met with one that has pleased me more.

You will have seen some of the notices of *Wildfell Hall*. I wish my sister felt the unfavourable ones less keenly. She does not *say* much, for she is of a remarkably taciturn, still, thoughtful nature, reserved even with her nearest of kin, but I cannot avoid seeing that her spirits are depressed sometimes. The fact is, neither she nor any of us expected that view to be taken of the book which has been taken by some critics. That it had faults of execution, faults of art, was obvious, but faults of intention or feeling could be suspected by none who knew the writer. For my own part, I consider the subject unfortunately chosen—it was one the author was not qualified to handle at once vigorously and truthfully. The simple and natural—quiet description and simple pathos are, I think, Acton Bell's forte. I liked *Agnes Grey* better than the present work.

Permit me to caution you not to speak of my sisters when you write to me. I mean, do not use the word in the plural. Ellis Bell will not endure to be alluded to under any other appellation than the *nom de plume*. I committed a grand error in betraying his identity to you and Mr. Smith. It was inadvertent—the words 'we are three sisters' escaped me before I was aware. I regretted the avowal the moment I had made it; I regret it bitterly now, for I find it is against every feeling and intention of Ellis Bell.

I was greatly amused to see in the *Examiner* of this week one of Newby's little cobwebs neatly swept away by some dexterous

brush. If Newby is not too old to profit by experience, such an exposure ought to teach him that 'Honesty is indeed the best policy.'

Your letter has just been brought to me. I must not pause to thank you, I should say too much. Our life is, and always has been, one of few pleasures, as you seem in part to guess, and for that reason we feel what passages of enjoyment come in our way very keenly; and I think if you knew *how* pleased I am to get a long letter from you, you would laugh at me.

In return, however, I smile at you for the earnestness with which you urge on us the propriety of seeing something of London society. There would be an advantage in it—a great advantage; yet it is one that no power on earth could induce Ellis Bell, for instance, to avail himself of. And even for Acton and Currer, the experiment of an introduction to society would be more formidable than you, probably, can well imagine. An existence of absolute seclusion and unvarying monotony, such as we have long—I may say, indeed, ever—been habituated to, tends, I fear, to unfit the mind for lively and exciting scenes, to destroy the capacity for social enjoyment.

The only glimpses of society I have ever had were obtained in my vocation of governess, and some of the most miserable moments I can recall were passed in drawing-rooms full of strange faces. At such times, my animal spirits would ebb gradually till they sank quite away, and when I could endure the sense of exhaustion and solitude no longer, I used to steal off, too glad to find any corner where I could really be alone. Still, I know very well, that though that experiment of seeing the world might give acute pain for the time, it would do good afterwards; and as I have never, that I remember, gained any important good without incurring proportionate suffering, I mean to try to take your advice some day, in part at least—to put off, if possible, that troublesome egotism which is always judging and blaming itself, and to try, country spinster as I am, to get a view of some sphere where civilised humanity is to be contemplated.

I smile at you again for supposing that I could be annoyed by what you say respecting your religious and philosophical views; that I could blame you for not being able, when you look amongst sects and creeds, to discover any one which you can exclusively and implicitly adopt as yours. I perceive myself that some light falls on earth from Heaven—that some rays from the

shrine of truth pierce the darkness of this life and world; but they are few, faint, and scattered, and who without presumption can assert that he has found the *only* true path upwards?

Yet ignorance, weakness, or indiscretion must have their creeds and forms; they must have their props—they cannot walk alone. Let them hold by what is purest in doctrine and simplest in ritual; *something*, they *must* have.

I never read Emerson; but the book which has had so healing an effect on your mind must be a good one. Very enviable is the writer whose words have fallen like a gentle rain on a soil that so needed and merited refreshment, whose influence has come like a genial breeze to lift a spirit which circumstances seem so harshly to have trampled. Emerson, if he has cheered you, has not written in vain.

May this feeling of self-reconcilement, of inward peace and strength, continue! May you still be lenient with, be just to, yourself! I will not praise nor flatter you, I should hate to pay those enervating compliments which tend to check the exertions of a mind that aspires after excellence; but I must permit myself to remark that if you had not something good and superior in you, something better, whether more *showy* or not, than is often met with, the assurance of your friendship would not make one so happy as it does; nor would the advantage of your correspondence be felt as such a privilege.

I hope Mrs. Williams's state of health may soon improve and her anxieties lessen. Blamable indeed are those who sow division where there ought to be peace, and especially deserving of the ban of society.

I thank both you and your family for keeping our secret. It will indeed be a kindness to us to persevere in doing so; and I own I have a certain confidence in the honourable discretion of a household of which you are the head.—Believe me, yours very sincerely,

C. Brontë.

Letter 302

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

August 14*th*, 1848.

My dear Sir,—My sister Anne thanks you, as well as myself, for your just critique on *Wildfell Hall*. It appears to me that your observations exactly hit both the strong and weak points of

the book, and the advice which accompanies them is worthy of, and shall receive, our most careful attention.

The first duty of an author is, I conceive, a faithful allegiance to Truth and Nature; his second, such a conscientious study of Art as shall enable him to interpret eloquently and effectively the oracles delivered by those two great deities. The Bells are very sincere in their worship of Truth, and they hope to apply themselves to the consideration of Art, so as to attain one day the power of speaking the language of conviction in the accents of persuasion; though they rather apprehend that whatever pains they take to modify and soften, an abrupt word or vehement tone will now and then occur to startle ears polite, whenever the subject shall chance to be such as moves their spirits within them.

I have already told you, I believe, that I regard Mr. Thackeray as the first of modern masters, and as the legitimate high priest of Truth; I study him accordingly with reverence. He, I see, keeps the mermaid's tail below water, and only hints at the dead men's bones and noxious slime amidst which it wriggles; *but*, his hint is more vivid than other men's elaborate explanations, and never is his satire whetted to so keen an edge as when with quiet mocking irony he modestly recommends to the approbation of the public his own exemplary discretion and forbearance. The world begins to know Thackeray rather better than it did two years or even a year ago, but as yet it only half knows him. His mind seems to me a fabric as simple and unpretending as it is deep-founded and enduring—there is no meretricious ornament to attract or fix a superficial glance; his great distinction of the genuine is one that can only be fully appreciated with time. There is something, a sort of 'still profound,' revealed in the concluding part of *Vanity Fair* which the discernment of one generation will not suffice to fathom. A hundred years hence, if he only lives to do justice to himself, he will be better known than he is now. A hundred years hence, some thoughtful critic, standing and looking down on the deep waters, will see shining through them the pearl without price of a purely original mind—such a mind as the Bulwers, etc., his contemporaries have *not*,—not acquirements gained from study, but the thing that came into the world with him—his inherent genius: the thing that made him, I doubt not, different as a child from other children, that caused him, perhaps, peculiar griefs and struggles in life, and that now makes him as a writer unlike other

writers. Excuse me for recurring to this theme, I do not wish to bore you.

You say Mr. Huntingdon reminds you of Mr. Rochester. Does he? Yet there is no likeness between the two; the foundation of each character is entirely different. Huntingdon is a specimen of the naturally selfish, sensual, superficial man, whose one merit of a joyous temperament only avails him while he is young and healthy, whose best days are his earliest, who never profits by experience, who is sure to grow worse the older he grows. Mr. Rochester has a thoughtful nature and a very feeling heart; he is neither selfish nor self-indulgent; he is ill-educated, misguided; errs, when he does err, through rashness and inexperience: he lives for a time as too many other men live, but being radically better than most men, he does not like that degraded life, and is never happy in it. He is taught the severe lessons of experience and has sense to learn wisdom from them. Years improve him; the effervescence of youth foamed away, what is really good in him still remains. His nature is like wine of a good vintage, time cannot sour, but only mellows him. Such at least was the character I meant to portray.

Heathcliffe, again, of *Wuthering Heights* is quite another creation. He exemplifies the effects which a life of continued injustice and hard usage may produce on a naturally perverse, vindictive, and inexorable disposition. Carefully trained and kindly treated, the black gipsy-cub might possibly have been reared into a human being, but tyranny and ignorance made of him a mere demon. The worst of it is, some of his spirit seems breathed through the whole narrative in which he figures: it haunts every moor and glen, and beckons in every fir-tree of the Heights.

I must not forget to thank you for the *Examiner* and *Atlas* newspapers. Poor Mr. Newby! It is not enough that the *Examiner* nails him by both ears to the pillory, but the *Atlas* brands a token of disgrace on his forehead. This is a deplorable plight, and he makes all matters worse by his foolish little answers to his assailants. It is a pity that he has no kind friend to suggest to him that he had better not bandy words with the *Examiner*. His plea about the 'printer' was too ludicrous, and his second note is pitiable. I only regret that the names of Ellis and Acton Bell should perforce be mixed up with his proceedings. My sister Anne wishes me to say that should she ever

write another work, Mr. Smith will certainly have the first offer of the copyright.

I hope Mrs. Williams's health is more satisfactory than when you last wrote. With every good wish to yourself and your family,—Believe me, my dear sir, yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

Letter 303

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

August 18*th*, 1848.

DEAR ELLEN,—I fear the broken weather will have interfered with the pleasure of your visit lately; perhaps, though, you have had more sunshine in Sussex, but in Yorkshire, nearly for the last month, one showery day has succeeded another, which circumstance has caused some dire forebodings about the crops. To-day, however, it is very fine, and I hope people's hearts and prospects will be cheered by a return of summer. About ten days ago I received a parcel containing the *Life of Mr. Simeon*, which you offered to lend me before you went South. It has been lying at the George Hotel in Bradford during the whole interval, a period of nearly two months. I have always found it unsafe to send parcels by Bradford, the innkeepers are so very careless. Papa has been very much interested in reading the book. There is frequent mention made in it of persons and places formerly well known to him; he thanks you for lending it.

The Robinsons are not married yet, but expect to be in the course of a few months. The unhappy Lady Scott is dead, after long suffering—both mental and physical. I imagine she expired two or three weeks ago. Mrs. Robinson is anxious to get her daughters husbands of any kind, that they may be off her hands, and that she may be free to marry Sir Edward Scott, whose infatuated slave, it would appear, she is. I do not know whether you remember the house called Woodlands, near Haworth, belonging to Mr. Jas. G——d. The owner has failed lately, and the house and all its furniture have been sold by auction. The S——s purchased a large portion of the latter to return to their relatives, who have now left the neighbourhood, and are gone to reside somewhere (I believe) in the East Riding. This is a great and unexpected reverse of fortune, and by throwing many of the poor of Haworth out of employment, has occasioned great distress in the village. I have

heard nothing whatever of the Taylors since their visit here. Write to me again soon, and believe me, yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

I had just written the foregoing when I received yours of the 16th. Dear Ellen, you must be careful in riding out; it is a most merciful thing that your late accident was not more serious; this is the second time your life or your limbs have been in serious peril. I *hope* no third risk will befall you. It gives me genuine pleasure to hear that you are so well amused, and that coming enjoyment is in prospect. I doubt not your health will benefit by the change. Good-bye.

Letter 304

TO MISS WOOLER

HAWORTH, *August* 28*th*, 1848.

MY DEAR MISS WOOLER,—Since you wish to hear from me while you are from home, I will write without further delay. It often happens that when we linger at first in answering a friend's letter, obstacles occur to retard us to an inexcusably late period.

In my last I forgot to answer a question you asked me, and was sorry afterwards for the omission; I will begin, therefore, by replying to it, though I fear what I can give will now come a little late. You said Mrs. Chapham had some thoughts of sending her daughter to school, and wished to know whether the Clergy Daughters' School at Casterton was an eligible place.

My personal knowledge of that institution is very much out of date, being derived from the experience of twenty years ago; the establishment was at that time in its infancy, and a sad, rickety infancy it was. Typhus fever decimated the school periodically, and consumption and scrofula in every variety of form, which bad air and water, and bad, insufficient diet can generate, preyed on the ill-fated pupils. It would not *then* have been a fit place for any of Mrs. Chapham's children. But, I understand, it is very much altered for the better since those days. The school is removed from Cowan Bridge (a situation as unhealthy as it was picturesque — low, damp, beautiful with wood and water) to Casterton; the accommodation, the diet, the discipline, the system of tuition, all are, I believe, entirely altered and greatly improved.

I was told that such pupils as behaved well and remained at school until their educations were finished were provided with situations as governesses, if they wished to adopt that vocation, and that much care was exercised in the selection ; it was added they were also furnished with an excellent wardrobe on quitting Casterton.

If I have the opportunity of reading the *Life of Dr. Arnold*, I shall not fail to profit thereby ; your recommendation makes me desirous to see it. Do you remember once speaking with approbation of a book called *Mrs. Leicester's School*, which you said you had met with, and you wondered by whom it was written ? I was reading the other day a lately published collection of the *Letters of Charles Lamb*, edited by Serjeant Talfourd, where I found it mentioned that *Mrs. Leicester's School* was the first production of Lamb and his sister. These letters are themselves singularly interesting ; they have hitherto been suppressed in all previous collections of Lamb's works and relics, on account of the frequent allusions they contain to the unhappy malady of Miss Lamb, and a frightful incident which darkened her earlier years. She was, it appears, a woman of the sweetest disposition, and, in her normal state, of the highest and clearest intellect, but afflicted with periodical insanity which came on once a year, or oftener. To her parents she was a most tender and dutiful daughter, nursing them in their old age, when one was physically and the other mentally infirm, with unremitting care, and at the same time toiling to add something by needlework to the slender resources of the family. A succession of laborious days and sleepless nights brought on a frenzy fit, in which she had the miserable misfortune to kill her own mother. She was afterwards placed in a madhouse, where she would have been detained for life, had not her brother Charles promised to devote himself to her and take her under his care—and for her sake renounce a project of marriage he then entertained. An instance of abnegation of self scarcely, I think, to be paralleled in the annals of the 'coarser sex.' They passed their subsequent lives together—models of fraternal affection, and would have been very happy but for the dread visitation to which Mary Lamb continued liable all her life. I thought it both a sad and edifying history. Your account of your little niece's naïve delight in beholding the morning sea for the first time amused and pleased me ; it proves she has some sensations —a refreshing circumstance in a day and generation when the

natural phenomenon of children wholly destitute of all pretension to the same is by no means an unusual occurrence.

I have written a long letter as you requested me, but I fear you will not find it very amusing. With love to your little companion, —Believe me, my dear Miss Wooler, yours affectionately and respectfully,

C. BRONTË.

Papa, I am most thankful to say, continues in very good health, considering his age. My sisters likewise are pretty well.

Letter 305

TO ELLEN TOMLINSON, 30 LOWER KING STREET, BLACKPOOL[1]

HAWORTH.

DEAR ELLEN,—It was again a disappointment to receive your note this morning. Let nothing short of sickness or absolute necessity prevent you coming on Monday. At four o'clock of the afternoon of that day we will either meet you or send for you ; if possible we will send a conveyance, so that weather may not be an obstacle. Try not to change any more.—Yours,

C. B.

Saturday

[1] This note is presumably to a servant-maid that had been engaged for the parsonage.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE DEATH OF BRANWELL BRONTË

ONE sympathises greatly with those who resent the constant intrusion of Branwell Brontë's name into the biography of his sisters. His is a painful, sordid story. He is responsible, moreover, either directly or indirectly, for all the fables that have grown up round the subject—the bogus portraits, the claim on his behalf that he wrote *Wuthering Heights*, and much else that is despicable. Neither his letters nor the various manuscripts of his that have survived show any of the talent that his sisters were at one time disposed to attribute to him. As for the foolish legend that he wrote *Wuthering Heights*,[1] it is only less crazy than another suggestion, that that book was written by Charlotte.

The growth of the legend as to Branwell's authorship is amazing. January Searle (George Searle Phillips), writing in *The Mirror*, gave a most circumstantial account of conversations with Branwell concerning a story he had written, and indeed he is made to discuss pretty freely Charlotte's novel as well. Another acquaintance, Newman Dearden, contributed to the *Halifax Guardian* of 1867 some 'facts,' as he called them, whence we learn that Branwell read to this and other friends a large part of the story in manuscript exactly as it reads in *Wuthering Heights*. Yet another witness, Edward Sloane, of Halifax, made similar statements, and Francis Grundy is even more explicit, as the following passage indicates:—

[1] See Leyland's *Brontë Family*.

Patrick Brontë declared to me, and what his sister said bore out the assertion, that he wrote a great portion of *Wuthering Heights* himself. Indeed, it is impossible for me to read that story without meeting with many passages which I feel certain *must* have come from his pen. The weird fancies of diseased genius with which he used to entertain me in our long talks at Luddendenfoot reappear in the pages of the novel, and I am inclined to believe that the very plot was his invention rather than his sister's.[1]

All this 'evidence' causes little commotion in the mind of any one who has watched how legends grow and gather force. Branwell could not have written a line of *Wuthering Heights*, although he did doubtless furnish phrases for the mouth of this or that example of human wreckage flitting so tragically through its pages. His last two years of life, the years of his three sisters' greatest literary activity, were spent by him in utter debasement entirely outside all intellectual interests. He was the author of his sisters' books only so far as he was the shameful cause of their intense isolation during this period. 'Branwell still remains at home, and while he is here you shall not come. I am more confirmed in that resolution the more I think of him,' writes Charlotte to her friend, Ellen Nussey, in November 1845, and thence to his death, in September 1848, things grew worse and worse.

Charlotte Brontë, who was the soul of sincerity, has said the final word in her letter to Mr. William Smith Williams announcing Branwell's death :—

My unhappy brother never knew what his sisters had done in literature—he was not aware that they had ever published a line. We could not tell him of our efforts for fear of causing him too deep a pang of remorse for his own time misspent, and talents misapplied.'

The account of Branwell's death is fully recorded in his sister's letters.

[1] *Pictures of the Past*, by Francis H. Grundy.

Letter 306

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

October 2nd, 1848.

My dear Sir,—'We have buried our dead out of our sight.' A lull begins to succeed the gloomy tumult of last week. It is not permitted us to grieve for him who is gone as others grieve for those they lose. The removal of our only brother must necessarily be regarded by us rather in the light of a mercy than a chastisement. Branwell was his father's and his sisters' pride and hope in boyhood, but since manhood the case has been otherwise. It has been our lot to see him take a wrong bent; to hope, expect, wait his return to the right path; to know the sickness of hope deferred, the dismay of prayer baffled; to experience despair at last—and now to behold the sudden early obscure close of what might have been a noble career.

I do not weep from a sense of bereavement—there is no prop withdrawn, no consolation torn away, no dear companion lost—but for the wreck of talent, the ruin of promise, the untimely dreary extinction of what might have been a burning and a shining light. My brother was a year my junior. I had aspirations and ambitions for him once, long ago—they have perished mournfully. Nothing remains of him but a memory of errors and sufferings. There is such a bitterness of pity for his life and death, such a yearning for the emptiness of his whole existence as I cannot describe. I trust time will allay these feelings.

My poor father naturally thought more of his *only* son than of his daughters, and, much and long as he had suffered on his account, he cried out for his loss like David for that of Absalom—my son! my son!—and refused at first to be comforted. And then when I ought to have been able to collect my strength and be at hand to support him, I fell ill with an illness whose approaches I had felt for some time previously, and of which the crisis was hastened by the awe and trouble of the death-scene—the first I had ever witnessed. The past has seemed to me a strange week. Thank God, for my father's sake, I am better now, though still feeble. I wish indeed I had more general physical strength—the want of it is sadly in my way. I cannot do what I would do for want of sustained animal spirits and efficient bodily vigour.

My unhappy brother never knew what his sisters had done in literature—he was not aware that they had ever published a line. We could not tell him of our efforts for fear of causing him too deep a pang of remorse for his own time misspent, and talents misapplied. Now he will *never* know. I cannot dwell longer on the subject at present—it is too painful.

I thank you for your kind sympathy, and pray earnestly that your sons may all do well, and that you may be spared the sufferings my father has gone through.—Yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

Letter 307

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

HAWORTH, *October 6th*, 1848.

MY DEAR SIR,—I thank you for your last truly friendly letter, and for the number of *Blackwood* which accompanied it. Both arrived at a time when a relapse of illness had depressed me much. Both did me good, especially the letter. I have only one fault to find with your expressions of friendship: they make me ashamed, because they seem to imply that you think better of me than I merit. I believe you are prone to think too highly of your fellow-creatures in general—to see too exclusively the good points of those for whom you have a regard. Disappointment must be the inevitable result of this habit. Believe all men, and women too, to be dust and ashes—a spark of the divinity now and then kindling in the dull heap—that is all. When I looked on the noble face and forehead of my dead brother (nature had favoured him with a fairer outside, as well as a finer constitution, than his sisters) and asked myself what had made him go ever wrong, tend ever downwards, when he had so many gifts to induce to, and aid in, an upward course, I seemed to receive an oppressive revelation of the feebleness of humanity—of the inadequacy of even genius to lead to true greatness if unaided by religion and principle. In the value, or even the reality, of these two things he would never believe till within a few days of his end; and then all at once he seemed to open his heart to a conviction of their existence and worth. The remembrance of this strange change now comforts my poor father greatly. I myself, with painful, mournful joy, heard him praying softly in his dying moments; and to the last prayer which my father offered up at his bedside he added.

'Amen.' How unusual that word appeared from his lips, of course you, who did not know him, connot conceive. Akin to this alteration was that in his feelings towards his relations—all the bitterness seemed gone.

When the struggle was over, and a marble calm began to succeed the last dread agony, I felt, as I had never felt before, that there was peace and forgiveness for him in Heaven. All his errors—to speak plainly, all his vices—seemed nothing to me in that moment: every wrong he had done, every pain he had caused, vanished; his sufferings only were remembered; the wrench to the natural affections only was left. If man can thus experience total oblivion of his fellow's imperfections, how much more can the Eternal Being, who made man, forgive His creature?

Had his sins been scarlet in their dye, I believe now they are white as wool. He is at rest, and that comforts us all. Long before he quitted this world, life had no happiness for him.

Blackwood's mention of *Jane Eyre* gratified me much, and will gratify me more, I dare say, when the ferment of other feelings than that of literary ambition shall have a little subsided in my mind.

The doctor has told me I must not expect too rapid a restoration to health; but to-day I certainly feel better. I am thankful to say my father has hitherto stood the storm well; and so have my *dear* sisters, to whose untiring care and kindness I am chiefly indebted for my present state of convalescence.—Believe me, my dear sir, yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

Letter 308

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

October 9th, '48.

MY DEAR ELLEN,—I should have written to you ere now had I been sure of your address, but I thought by this you had probably left Rye as you talked of being in London soon. The past three weeks have been a dark interval in our humble home. Branwell's constitution has been failing fast all the summer; but still, neither the doctors nor himself thought him so near his end as he was. He was entirely confined to his bed for but one single day, and was in the village two days before his death. He died, after twenty minutes' struggle, on Sunday morning, September 24th. He was perfectly conscious till the last agony came on.

His mind had undergone the peculiar change which frequently precedes death, two days previously; the calm of better feelings filled it; a return of natural affection marked his last moments. He is in God's hands now; and the All-powerful is likewise the All-merciful. A deep conviction that he rests at last—rests well after his brief, erring, suffering, feverish life, fills and quiets my mind now. The final separation, the spectacle of his pale corpse, gave more acute, bitter pain than I could have imagined. Till the last hour comes, we never know how much we can forgive, pity, regret a near relation. All his vices were and are nothing now. We remember only his woes. Papa was acutely distressed at first, but, on the whole, has borne the event well. Emily and Anne are pretty well, though Anne is always delicate, and Emily has a cold and cough at present. It was my fate to sink at the crisis, when I should have collected my strength. Headache and sickness came on first on the Sunday; I could not regain my appetite. Then internal pain attacked me. I became at once much reduced. It was impossible to eat a morsel. At last, bilious fever declared itself. I was confined to bed a week—a dreary week, but, thank God! health seems now returning. I can sit up all day, and take moderate nourishment. The doctor said at first I should be very slow in recovering, but I seem to get on faster than he anticipated. I am ordered to be scrupulously careful about diet, etc., and I try to be obedient to directions.

I shall be very glad to hear from you again, dear Ellen, it is true enough that your letters interest me; there is no mistake there. I feel that I do not write to you enough in detail, but I cannot help it; forgive me that shortcoming as you have forgiven me many others.—Yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

P.S.—You are to understand that my bilious fever is quite gone now and that I am truly *much better.*

Letter 309

TO MERCY NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *October* 14*th*, 1848.

MY DEAR MISS NUSSEY,—Accept my sincere thanks for your kind letter. The event to which you allude came upon us with startling suddenness and was a severe shock to us all. My poor brother has long had a shaken constitution, and during the

summer his appetite had been diminished, and he had seemed weaker, but neither we, nor himself, nor any medical man who was consulted on his case, thought it one of immediate danger: he was out of doors two days before his death, and was only confined to bed one single day.

I thank you for your kind sympathy; many, under the circumstances, would think our loss rather a relief than otherwise: in truth, we must acknowledge, in all humility and gratitude, that God has greatly tempered judgment with mercy; but yet, as you doubtless know from experience, the last earthly separation cannot take place between near relatives without the keenest pangs on the part of the survivors. Every wrong and sin is forgotten then; pity and grief share the heart and the memory between them. Yet we are not without comfort in our affliction. A most propitious change marked the few last days of poor Branwell's life; his demeanour, his language, his sentiments were all singularly altered and softened. This change could not be owing to the fear of death, for till within half an hour of his decease he seemed unconscious of danger. In God's hands we leave him: He sees not as man sees.

Papa, I am thankful to say, has borne the event pretty well; his distress was great at first, to lose an only son is no ordinary trial, but his physical strength has not hitherto failed him, and he has now in a great measure recovered his mental composure; my dear sisters are pretty well also. Unfortunately illness attacked me at the crisis when strength was most needed; I bore up for a day or two, hoping to be better, but got worse. Fever, sickness, total loss of appetite, and internal pain were the symptoms. The doctor pronounced it to be bilious fever, but I think it must have been in a mitigated form; it yielded to medicine and care in a few days. I was only confined to my bed a week, and am, I trust, nearly well now. I felt it a grievous thing to be incapacitated from action and effort at a time when action and effort were most called for. The past month seems an overclouded period in my life.

I am truly sorry to hear that Ellen is not in good health, having fully depended on her deriving benefit from her stay in the South. Mrs. Gorham is raised in my estimation by her favourable opinion of Ellen; it proves she has some discrimination.

Give my best love to Mrs. Nussey and Miss M., and believe me, my dear Miss Nussey, yours sincerely C. BRONTË.

Letter 310

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

October 18*th*, 1848.

MY DEAR SIR,—Not feeling competent this evening either for study or serious composition, I will console myself with writing to you. My malady, which the doctors call a bilious fever, lingers, or rather returns with each sudden change of weather, though I am thankful to say the relapses have hitherto been much milder than the first attack; but they keep me weak and reduced, especially as I am obliged to observe a very low spare diet.

My book, alas! is laid aside for the present; both head and hand seem to have lost their cunning; imagination is pale, stagnant, mute. This incapacity chagrins me; sometimes I have a feeling of cankering care on the subject, but I combat it as well as I can; it does no good.

I am afraid I shall not write a cheerful letter to you. A letter, however, of some kind I am determined to write, for I should be sorry to appear a neglectful correspondent to one from whose communications I have derived, and still derive, so much pleasure. Do not talk about not being on a level with Currer Bell, or regard him as 'an awful person'; if you saw him now, sitting muffled at the fireside, shrinking before the east wind (which for some days has been blowing wild and keen over our cold hills), and incapable of lifting a pen for any more formidable task than that of writing a few lines to an indulgent friend, you would be sorry not to deem yourself greatly his superior, for you would feel him to be a poor creature.

You may be sure I read your views on the providence of God and the nature of man with interest. You are already aware that in much of what you say my opinions coincide with those you express, and where they differ I shall not attempt to bias you. Thought and conscience are, or ought to be, free; and, at any rate, if your views were universally adopted there would be no persecution, no bigotry. But never try to proselytise, the world is not yet fit to receive what you and Emerson say: man, as he now is, can no more do without creeds and forms in religion than he can do without laws and rules in social intercourse. You and Emerson judge others by yourselves; all mankind are not like you, any more than every Israelite was like Nathaniel.

'Is there a human being,' you ask, 'so depraved that an act of kindness will not touch—nay, a word melt him?' There are hundreds of human beings who trample on acts of kindness and mock at words of affection. I know this though I have seen but little of the world. I suppose I have something harsher in my nature than you have, something which every now and then tells me dreary secrets about my race, and I cannot believe the voice of the Optimist, charm he never so wisely. On the other hand, I feel forced to listen when a Thackeray speaks. I know truth is delivering her oracles by his lips.

As to the great, good, magnanimous acts which have been performed by some men, we trace them up to motives and then estimate their value; a few, perhaps, would gain and many lose by this test. The study of motives is a strange one, not to be pursued too far by one fallible human being in reference to his fellows.

Do not condemn me as uncharitable. I have no wish to urge my convictions on you, but I know that while there are many good, sincere, gentle people in the world, with whom kindness is all-powerful, there are also not a few like that false friend (I had almost written *fiend*) whom you so well and vividly described in one of your late letters, and who, in acting out his part of domestic traitor, must often have turned benefits into weapons wherewith to wound his benefactors.—Believe me, yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

Letter 311

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

October 29*th*, '48.

DEAR ELLEN,—I am sorry you should have been uneasy at my not writing to you ere this, but you must remember it is scarcely a week since I received your last, and my life is not so varied that in the interim much should have occurred worthy of mention. You insist that I should write about myself—this puts me in straits—for I really have nothing interesting to say about myself. I think I have now nearly got over the effects of my late illness, and am almost restored to my normal condition of health. I sometimes wish that it was a little higher, but we ought to be content with such blessings as we have, and not pine after those that are out of our reach. I feel much more uneasy about my

sisters than myself just now. Emily's cold and cough are very obstinate. I fear she has pain in the chest, and I sometimes catch a shortness in her breathing, when she has moved at all quickly. She looks very, very thin and pale. Her reserved nature occasions me great uneasiness of mind. It is useless to question her; you get no answers. It is still more useless to recommend remedies; they are never adopted. Nor can I shut my eyes to the fact of Anne's great delicacy of constitution. The late sad event has, I feel, made me more apprehensive than common. I cannot help feeling much depressed sometimes. I try to leave all in God's hands; to trust in His goodness; but faith and resignation are difficult to practise under some circumstances. The weather has been most unfavourable for invalids of late; sudden changes of temperature, and cold penetrating winds have been frequent here. Should the atmosphere become settled, perhaps a favourable effect might be produced on the general health, and those harassing coughs and colds be removed. Papa has not quite escaped, but he has, so far, stood it out better than any of us. You must not mention my going to Brookroyd this winter. I could not, and would not, leave home on any account. I am truly sorry to hear of Miss Heald's serious illness, it seems to me she has been for some years out of health now. These things make one *feel* as well as *know*, that this world is not our abiding-place. We should not knit human ties too close, or clasp human affections too fondly. They must leave us, or we must leave them, one day. Good-bye for the present. God restore health and strength to you and to all who need it.—Yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

Letter 312

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

November 2nd, 1848.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have received, since I last wrote to you, two papers, the *Standard of Freedom* and the *Morning Herald*, both containing notices of the Poems; which notices, I hope, will at least serve a useful purpose to Mr. Smith in attracting public attention to the volume. As critiques, I should have thought more of them had they more fully recognised Ellis Bell's merits; but the lovers of abstract poetry are few in number.

Your last letter was very welcome, it was written with so kind an intention: you made it so interesting in order to divert my

mind. I should have thanked you for it before now, only that I kept waiting for a cheerful day and mood in which to address you, and I grieve to say the shadow which has fallen on our quiet home still lingers over it. I am better, but others are ill now. Papa is not well, my sister Emily has something like a slow inflammation of the lungs, and even our old servant, who has lived with us nearly a quarter of a century, is suffering under serious indisposition.

I would fain hope that Emily is a little better this evening, but it is difficult to ascertain this. She is a real stoic in illness: she neither seeks nor will accept sympathy. To put any questions, to offer any aid, is to annoy; she will not yield a step before pain or sickness till forced; not one of her ordinary avocations will she voluntarily renounce. You must look on and see her do what she is unfit to do, and not dare to say a word—a painful necessity for those to whom her health and existence are as precious as the life in their veins. When she is ill there seems to be no sunshine in the world for me. The tie of sister is near and dear indeed, and I think a certain harshness in her powerful and peculiar character only makes me cling to her more. But this is all family egotism (so to speak)—excuse it, and, above all, never allude to it, or to the name Emily, when you write to me. I do not always show your letters, but I never withhold them when they are inquired after.

I am sorry I cannot claim for the name Brontë the honour of being connected with the notice in the *Bradford Observer*. That paper is in the hands of dissenters, and I should think the best articles are usually written by one or two intelligent dissenting ministers in the town. Alexander Harris[1] is fortunate in your encouragement, as Currer Bell once was. He has not forgotten the first letter he received from you, declining indeed his MS. of *The Professor*, but in terms so different from those in which the rejections of the other publishers had been expressed—with so much more sense and kind feeling, it took away the sting of disappointment and kindled new hope in his mind.

Currer Bell might expostulate with you again about thinking too well of him, but he refrains; he prefers acknowledging that the expression of a fellow-creature's regard—even if more than he deserves—does him good: it gives him a sense of content. What-

[1] Alexander Harris wrote *A Converted Atheist's Testimony to the Truth of Christianity*, and other now forgotten works.

ever portion of the tribute is unmerited on his part, would, he is aware, if exposed to the test of daily acquaintance, disperse like a broken bubble, but he has confidence that a portion, however minute, of solid friendship would remain behind, and that portion he reckons amongst his treasures.

I am glad, by the bye, to hear that *Madeline* is come out at last, and was happy to see a favourable notice of that work and of *The Three Paths* in the *Morning Herald.* I wish Miss Kavanagh all success.

Trusting that Mrs. Williams's health continues strong, and that your own and that of all your children is satisfactory, for without health there is little comfort,—I am, my dear sir, yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

Letter 313

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

November 16*th*, 1848.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have already acknowledged in a note to Mr. Smith the receipt of the parcel of books, and in my thanks for this well-timed attention I am sure I ought to include you; your taste, I thought, was recognisable in the choice of some of the volumes, and a better selection it would have been difficult to make.

To-day I have received the *Spectator* and the *Revue des deux Mondes.* The *Spectator* consistently maintains the tone it first assumed regarding the Bells. I have little to object to its opinion as far as Currer Bell's portion of the volume is concerned. It is true the critic sees only the faults, but for these his perception is tolerably accurate. Blind is he as any bat, insensate as any stone, to the merits of Ellis. He cannot feel or will not acknowledge that the very finish and *labor limæ* which Currer wants, Ellis has; he is not aware that the 'true essence of poetry' pervades his compositions. Because Ellis's poems are short and abstract, the critics think them comparatively insignificant and dull. They are mistaken.

The notice in the *Revue des deux Mondes* is one of the most able, the most acceptable to the author, of any that has yet appeared. Eugène Forçade understood and enjoyed *Jane Eyre.* I cannot say that of all who have professed to criticise it. The censures are as well-founded as the commendations. The speci-

mens of the translation given are on the whole good; now and then the meaning of the original has been misapprehended, but generally it is well rendered.

Every cup given us to taste in this life is mixed. Once it would have seemed to me that an evidence of success like that contained in the *Revue* would have excited an almost exultant feeling in my mind. It comes, however, at a time when counteracting circumstances keep the balance of the emotions even—when my sister's continued illness darkens the present and dims the future. That will seem to me a happy day when I can announce to you that Emily is better. Her symptoms continue to be those of slow inflammation of the lungs, tight cough, difficulty of breathing, pain in the chest, and fever. We watch anxiously for a change for the better—may it soon come.—I am, my dear sir, yours sincerely, C. BRONTË.

As I was about to seal this I received your kind letter. Truly glad am I to hear that Fanny is taking the path which pleases her parents. I trust she may persevere in it. She may be sure that a contrary one will never lead to happiness; and I should think that the reward of seeing you and her mother pleased must be so sweet that she will be careful not to run the risk of forfeiting it.

It is somewhat singular that I had already observed to my sisters, I did not doubt it was Mr. Lewes who had shown you the *Revue.*

Letter 314

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

November 22nd, 1848.

MY DEAR SIR,—I put your most friendly letter into Emily's hands as soon as I had myself perused it, taking care, however, not to say a word in favour of homœopathy—that would not have answered. It is best usually to leave her to form her own judgment, and *especially* not to advocate the side you wish her to favour; if you do, she is sure to lean in the opposite direction, and ten to one will argue herself into non-compliance. Hitherto she has refused medicine, rejected medical advice; no reasoning, no entreaty, has availed to induce her to see a physician. After reading your letter she said, 'Mr. Williams's intention was kind

and good, but he was under a delusion: Homœopathy was only another form of quackery.' Yet she may reconsider this opinion and come to a different conclusion; her second thoughts are often the best.

The *North American Review* is worth reading; there is no mincing the matter there. What a bad set the Bells must be! What appalling books they write! To-day, as Emily appeared a little easier, I thought the *Review* would amuse her, so I read it aloud to her and Anne. As I sat between them at our quiet but now somewhat melancholy fireside, I studied the two ferocious authors. Ellis, the 'man of uncommon talents, but dogged, brutal, and morose,' sat leaning back in his easy-chair drawing his impeded breath as he best could, and looking, alas! piteously pale and wasted; it is not his wont to laugh, but he smiled half-amused and half in scorn as he listened. Acton was sewing, no emotion ever stirs him to loquacity, so he only smiled too, dropping at the same time a single word of calm amazement to hear his character so darkly portrayed. I wonder what the reviewer would have thought of his own sagacity could he have beheld the pair as I did. Vainly, too, might he have looked round for the masculine partner in the firm of 'Bell & Co.' How I laugh in my sleeve when I read the solemn assertions that *Jane Eyre* was written in partnership, and that it 'bears the marks of more than one mind and one sex.'

The wise critics would certainly sink a degree in their own estimation if they knew that yours or Mr. Smith's was the first masculine hand that touched the MS. of *Jane Eyre*, and that till you or he read it no masculine eye had scanned a line of its contents, no masculine ear heard a phrase from its pages. However, the view they take of the matter rather pleases me than otherwise. If they like, I am not unwilling they should think a dozen ladies and gentlemen aided at the compilation of the book. Strange patchwork it must seem to them—this chapter being penned by Mr., and that by Miss or Mrs. Bell; that character or scene being delineated by the husband, that other by the wife! The gentleman, of course, doing the rough work, the lady getting up the finer parts. I admire the idea vastly.

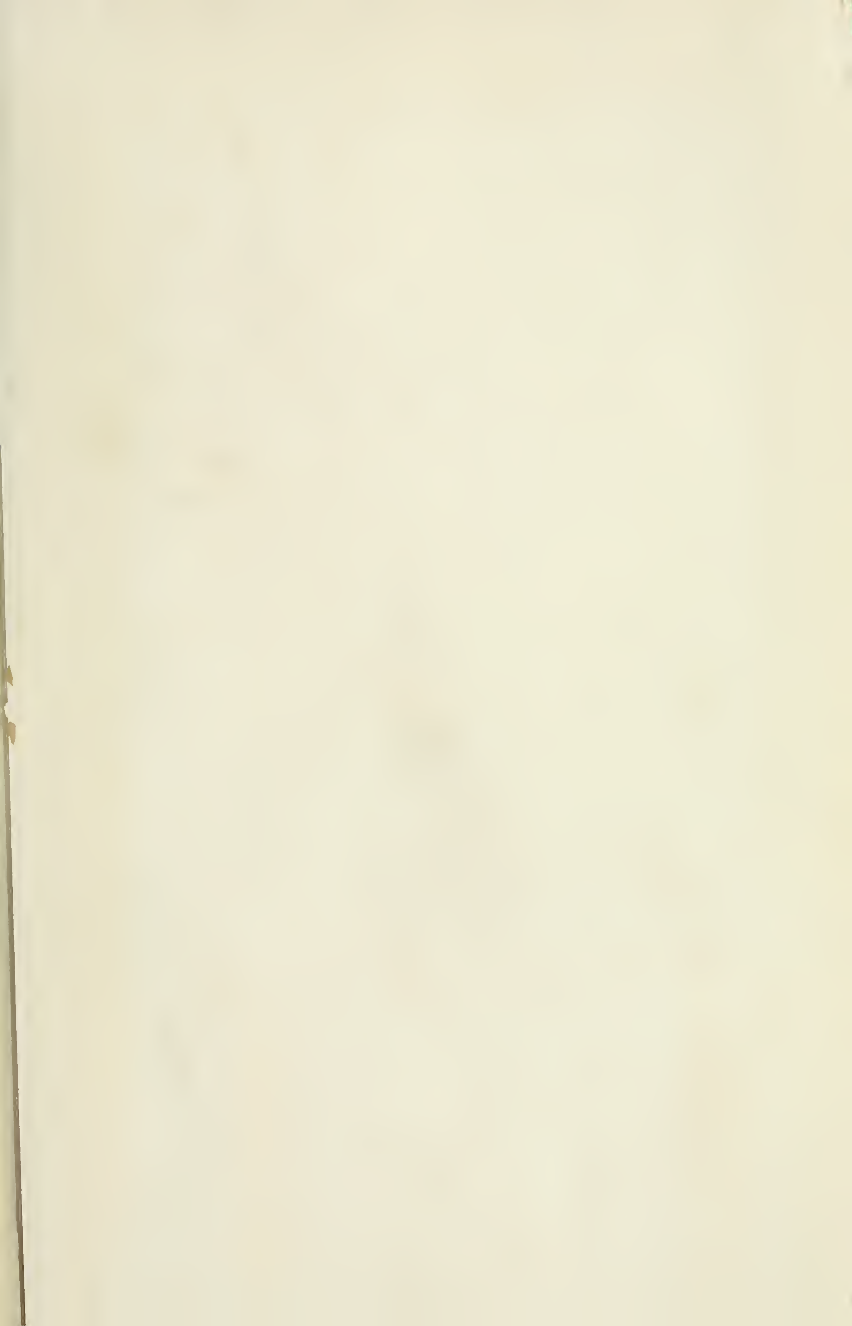
I have read *Madeline*. It is a fine pearl in simple setting. Julia Kavanagh has my esteem; I would rather know her than many far more brilliant personages. Somehow my heart leans more to her than to Eliza Lynn, for instance. Not that I have

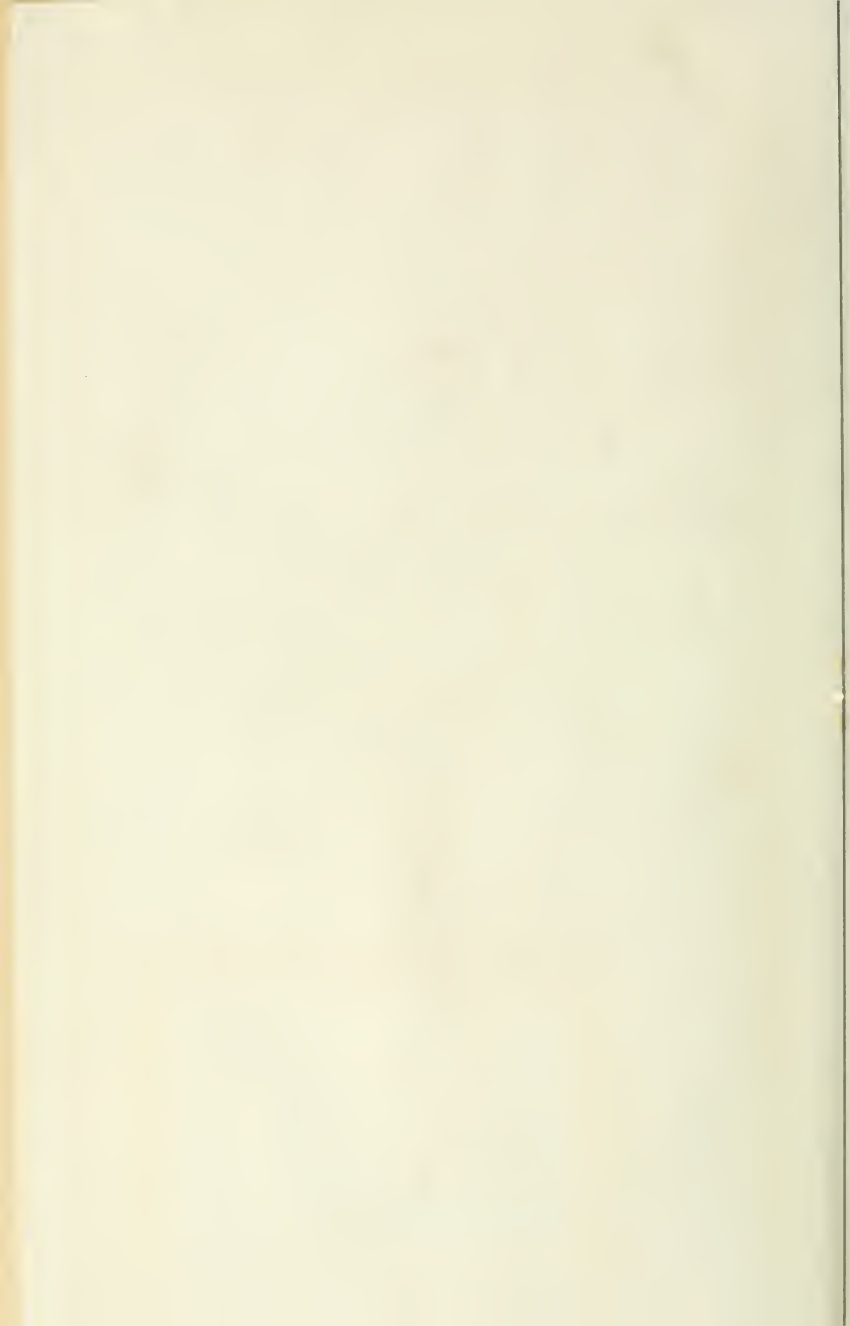
read either *Amymone* or *Azeth*, but I have seen extracts from them which I found it literally impossible to digest. They presented to my imagination Lytton Bulwer in petticoats—an overwhelming vision. By the bye, the American critic talks admirable sense about Bulwer—candour obliges me to confess that.

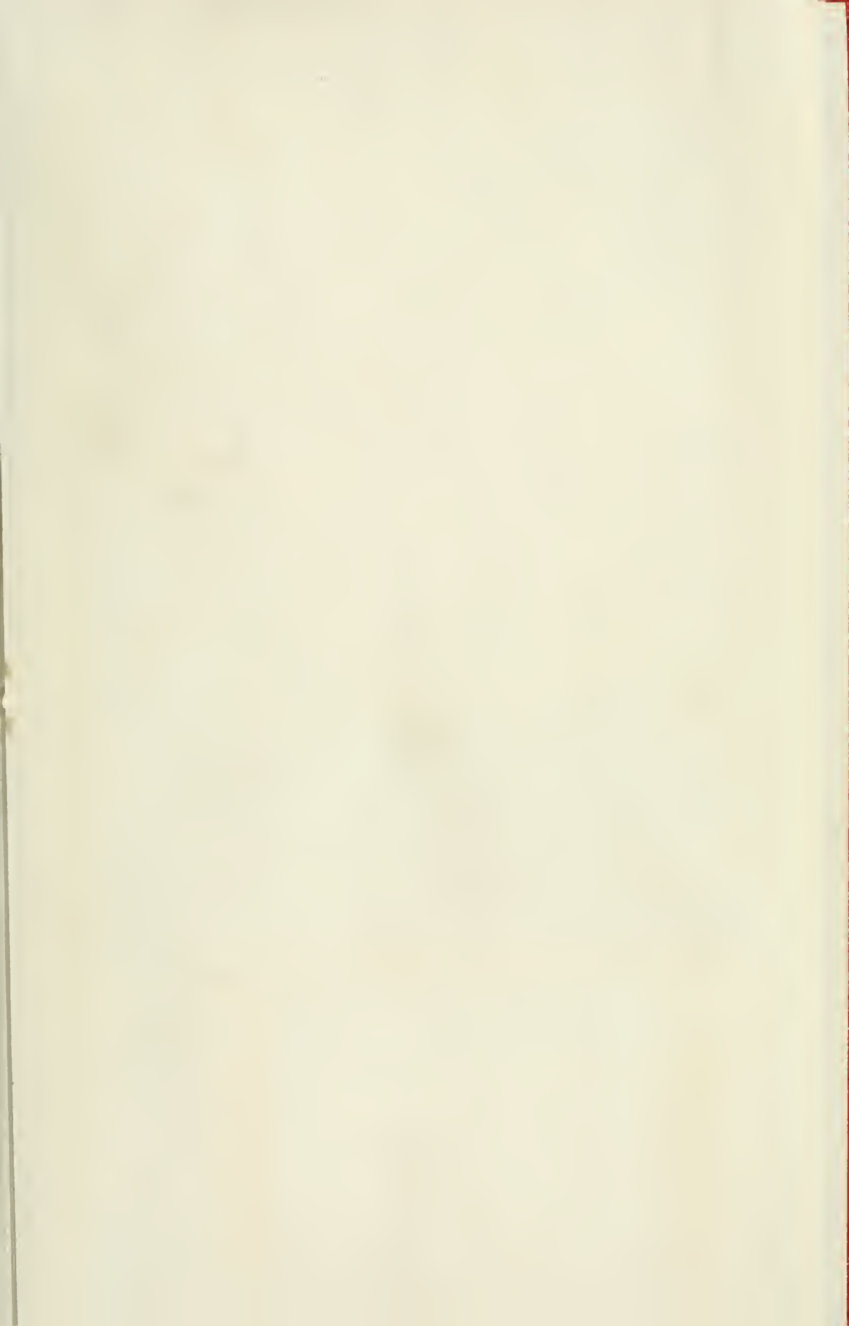
I must abruptly bid you good-bye for the present.—Yours sincerely, CURRER BELL.

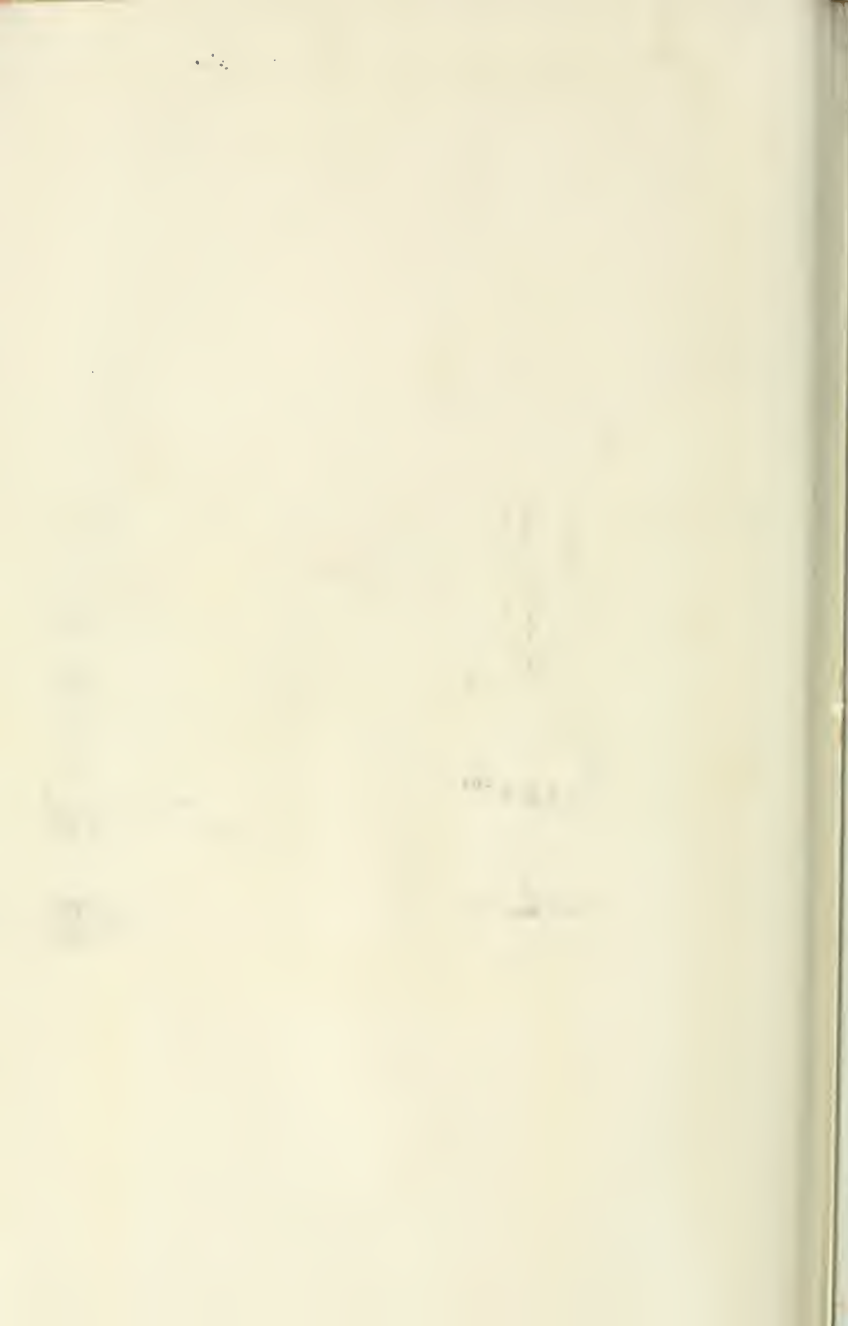
END OF VOL. I.

Printed by T. and A. CONSTABLE, Printers to His Majesty
at the Edinburgh University Press









BINDING SECT. APR 20 1981

P3

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

PR
4168
S44
1908
v.1

Shorter, Clement King
The Brontës [2d ed.]